

# AL-AHRAM

*Weekly*

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## Ganzouri meets Seguin

PRIME Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri yesterday received Philippe Seguin, president of the French National Assembly, who arrived in Cairo from Syria on the last stop of a Middle East tour. The two leaders discussed bilateral relations and the Middle East peace process. The head of the foreign relations committee at the People's Assembly and the French ambassador to Cairo attended the meeting.

**Prisoner release**  
A WEEK ahead of the Palestinian elections, Israel yesterday released hundreds of Palestinian prisoners as part of its peace agreement with the PLO. Among the 850 released were members of the Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups, as well as other Palestinians convicted of killing Arabs collaborating with Israel.

While the number of prisoners to be released over the next few days is expected to reach 1,200, some 25 female prisoners refused to leave jail in protest against Israel's insistence on not freeing six other female inmates convicted of killing Israelis.

## New unrest

A BAIRAIN government source has stated that security forces used "legal" methods to disperse a gathering of a few hundred demonstrators in Al-Deek, outside the capital Manama on Tuesday.

A statement by the opposition group the Bahrain Freedom Movement, claimed that hundreds of protesters in Al-Deek, Jadhaf, and Sababas took to the streets to protest the government's persistent policy of closing down mosques and clamping down on prominent Shi'ite opposition clerics and their followers.

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## A last farewell

This morning President Hosni Mubarak arrives in Paris to pay his last respects to François Mitterrand, France's longest serving president, who died on Monday, aged 79. President Mubarak will be joined by up to 20 heads of state and numerous dignitaries, including UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali and American Vice President Al Gore, at a solemn mass in the cathedral of Notre Dame which will take place simultaneously with Mitterrand's funeral in Jarnac, writes Sherif El-Shabashy.

During the final years of his 14 year presidency Mitterrand was a regular visitor to Egypt, and tried to spend at least a couple of weeks in Aswan each winter. He came in search of peace and the sun, he said during his last visit to the country three weeks before his death, when he stayed, as always, at the Old Cataract Hotel.

Mitterrand left Egypt for the last time on 29 December. On 5 January he wrote to President Mubarak, via the Egyptian ambassador to France, expressing his appreciation for the hospitality extended to him in Egypt, and his admiration of the beauty of the country. The letter was perhaps the last to bear the signature of François Mitterrand.



Taking leave: François Mitterrand departs the Old Cataract Hotel in Aswan for the last time on 29 December, before being driven to the airport on his way back to Paris (photos: Amr Nabil)

## Time pressure for peace

As Warren Christopher began a new round of shuttle diplomacy in the region, Jordan's King Hussein made his first public appearance in Tel Aviv

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher arrived in Jerusalem yesterday at the outset of a new round of shuttle diplomacy, and pledged to intensify efforts to achieve a Syrian-Israeli peace agreement ahead of US and Israeli elections later this year. On leaving Washington, Christopher said that the talks had now reached a crucial stage where both sides could see the tradeoffs necessary for a settlement — an apparent allusion to a possible kind-for-peace arrangement involving withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

"We've come to a critical point in the negotiations, where we need to coalesce on some of the main issues", he said. "We need to bring them together and to move forward at an intensified pace."

As Christopher met with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Jordan's King Hussein flew his private helicopter to Tel Aviv for a one-day visit intended to cement the new friendship between the two countries.

Israeli radio stations played Arabic songs in honour of the king's visit. "Welcome, your majesty, King Hussein", read a banner headline in Arabic in the Israeli Hebrew-language daily newspaper *Yediot Achronot*.

Hussein's visit seemed to be timed to send a message to Syria about the kind of peace Israel is demanding after years of being shunned by the Arab world as an illegitimate creation of the West, according to The Associated Press.

For his part, Peres said Israel and Syria would need to accelerate the pace of negotiations if they wanted to seal an accord before the Israeli elections. "We have only a few months at our disposal... and without a very intensive effort,

Hussein told *Yediot Achronot*: "I'm certainly aware of my popularity [in Israel] and it touches my heart." Hussein and Peres were meeting with Christopher to "exchange views on peace and on the possibilities of expanding it", the king said.

Meanwhile, Christopher acknowledged that "there are very serious gaps" remaining between Syria and Israel, but said he had arrived in Israel "in a hopeful frame of mind".

His 16th negotiating trip to the Middle East got off to a bumpy start. First, his departure from Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, was delayed for three and a half hours because of blizzard conditions. And on the way across the Atlantic, the automatic pilot failed, causing the plane to list from side to side.

Following the meeting with Peres, Christopher was asked if the Israeli general elections in October and US presidential elections in November would have an impact on the negotiations. They did, he replied, impose a time-scale on the process. "1996 has its electoral timetable which inevitably requires intensification: an acceleration of the process. We are going to intensify our efforts to ensure that Israel achieves peace with security."

For his part, Peres said Israel and Syria would need to accelerate the pace of negotiations if they wanted to seal an accord before the Israeli elections. "We have only a few months at our disposal... and without a very intensive effort,

I doubt if we'll be able to succeed," he said.

But he described the two rounds of talks held near Washington recently as "a highly successful encounter" which had "initiated a new spirit between the two sides".

Christopher will meet with Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad in Damascus on Friday, hoping for a response to Israeli proposals made in talks which recessed a week earlier.

The trip is expected to result in dates for more talks between Israeli and Syrian officials in the United States, possibly around 22 January.

"All the issues are on the table and it is possible for the parties now to see the tradeoffs", Christopher said. The negotiations are concentrating on territory, peace terms and border security measures in the case of Israel returning the strategic Golan Heights, captured in the 1967 War.

The Syrian government yesterday signalled its readiness to engage in "continuous negotiations" with Israel until the two sides reached a peace agreement. The official newspaper *Al-Baath* said that "great hopes" were attached to Christopher's current trip.

According to the newspaper, "if there is anything new in the Syrian position, it is a readiness to engage in continuous negotiations, negotiations that will bring the results necessary both for peace and regional security."

Next weekend, Christopher will meet with PLO chairman

Yasser Arafat, focusing on the 20 January elections of a legislature for the self-rule areas in the West Bank and Gaza.

Arafat has blamed Peres for the recent assassination of Islamist militant Yehiya Ayash, who is believed to have masterminded suicide attacks against Israel. In a departure from his recent refusal to praise terrorists, Arafat also lauded Ayash. The killing and its aftermath could be a source of friction.

"I'm going to be reminding [Arafat]," said Christopher, "as I've done every time I've been with him, about his commitment to bring an end to terrorism."

PLO officials have criticised Hussein's visit to Israel, saying that he should first have visited lands under Palestinian rule.

Authorities clamped unprecedented security arrangements on Tel Aviv, deploying some 6,000 policemen, special forces, Shin Bet agents and snipers to protect the king.

Hussein was welcomed with full military honours at Tel Aviv airport by Peres before inaugurating a new trauma unit dedicated to Yitzhak Rabin at the Ichilov Hospital, where the prime minister died on 4 November after he was shot by a Jewish radical.

The king was travelling afterwards to the shores of the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel to take part, with Peres and Christopher, in a ceremony honouring "those who have contributed to the cause of peace".

## News analysis

By Ghada Ragab

## Steering towards growth

Ministers and cabinet portfolios were reshuffled last week as the government steered towards a full-fledged economic recovery. The Foreign Trade Department was moved from the Ministry of Economy to the Ministry of Supply and Home Trade, the Ministry of International Cooperation went to the minister of economy, and the man who spent over 10 years marketing Egypt as an investment destination was put in charge of tax collection.

The economy bore the full weight of last week's cabinet changes, geared to accommodate the needs of the second phase of economic reform.

The appointment of Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri helped make the change a smooth one. El-Ganzouri is known to be the architect of the economic and social plan that has taken Egypt from a centrally planned to a market economy over the past five years. He has been at the heart of the decision-making process for the 13 years he has spent as a cabinet minister.

As outlined in President Mubarak's meeting with the cabinet's economic group last Sunday, the pressing tasks before the new cabinet are to speed up the second phase of economic reforms, which aim at generating employment, increasing the productivity of labour and capital and improving the quality of life for the average Egyptian.

In this context, the long-awaited investment law promises finally to materialise after years of being passed from one parliament to the next. The main purpose of this law are to unify existing investment laws, which occasionally overlap; to cut red tape involved in establishing projects; and to offer tax incentives to industrial projects. Also on the cabinet's agenda is a system of tax rebates for exporters, and proposals to cut bank interest rates.

Private investors, who point out that the government has been promising to enact many of these measures for over a decade, found consolation in the appointment of Mohamed El-Ghribi, as the new minister of finance. El-Ghribi was for 10 years the executive president of the General Authority for Investment (GAFI), the government body which awards permission for the establishment of new projects. Touring the world and giving dozens of speeches to lure both foreign and Egyptian investors, El-Ghribi emerged as a symbol of the government's seriousness in attracting investment.

Businessmen say they hope El-Ghribi's appointment is a sign that the government is preparing to reverse the tight fiscal policies it has followed since the inception of the economic reform programme. Last week, El-Ghribi said he plans to orient monetary policies towards promoting growth and encouraging investment.

Nowal El-Tatawi, minister of economy and international cooperation, brings to the integrated portfolio a mixed, but relevant, experience as a banker. Formerly the chairwoman of the Arab Investment Bank, El-Tatawi is now responsible for gearing up the banking sector, the stock market and the foreign exchange market to serve the goal of investment promotion.

El-Tatawi's experience as an economist with the United Nations and the World Bank should be useful as she continues Egypt's four-year-old policy of funneling foreign assistance as loans to the private sector through the commercial banks.

El-Tatawi takes on the ministry of economy minus the Foreign Trade Department, which Ahmed Gweli, minister of trade and supply, won for his firm stance against commercial fraud and monopoly in the local market. Since Egypt became a founding member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the department has been for-

mulating measures to dismantle non-tariff barriers to trade in accordance with the GATT agreement. Gweli's ministry will now be charged with preparing the draft of anti-dumping and anti-trust laws, and with establishing the agencies that will execute these laws to protect local industries against unfair trade practices.

Still hammering away at a Herculean task, Atif Ebied, minister of the Public Enterprise Sector, Administrative Development and Environment Affairs, will continue his task in restructuring and privatising the public sector.

Four years into the programme, Minister Ebied has succeeded in selling off part of the state's stakes in a number of profitable companies, which have been snapped up at the stock exchange. However, the real challenge will emerge when the state begins selling loss-making companies, which carry huge debts and employ hundreds of thousands of workers. Ebied's ability to reconcile the necessity of ridding the state budget of this burden — given the difficulty of finding buyers willing to take it on — with the limitations imposed by the labour force will be sorely tested.

Perhaps one new cabinet minister Ebied can rely on for help in dealing with public sector affairs is Minister of Industry Suleiman Redi, who brings his 30-year experience in the public sector to the post. Redi spent some 12 years in the public-sector aluminium giant, the Egyptian Aluminium Company, in which he conducted a massive restructuring and expansion project.

For the post of minister of state for planning, Ganzouri chose Zafer El-Bishri, who, as deputy chairman of the National Investment Bank (NIB) since 1984 had been second-in-command to El-Ganzouri, who headed the NIB while he himself was minister of planning.

The new cabinet takes on a mixed inheritance. The first phase of reforms, initiated in 1991, have achieved marked success in the monetary and fiscal areas. Government figures indicate that the average annual inflation rate was down to about 8 per cent last November, the budget deficit has been brought down to a record 1.7 per cent of GDP, the current account surplus is projected to be 1 per cent of GDP, and international reserves stand at above \$18 billion, covering 22 months of imports.

On the structural side, however, the picture is less bright. Productivity is low and gross domestic investment is about 24 per cent of GDP. Experts say that for Egypt to double its current growth rate from 4.5 per cent to 9 per cent, gross domestic investment must increase to about 33 per cent of GDP. A massive balance of trade deficit approaching \$8 billion persists offsetting a 60 per cent jump in non-cotton, non-oil exports.

However, their diverse but equally testing responsibilities aside, the immediate task facing the new ministers is the new round of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund over Egypt's economic policy. The IMF team due to arrive in Cairo later this month will hold the first talks with Egyptian officials since their brief meeting last October in Washington DC, which was held on the fringe of the annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank. The meetings represented a breakthrough in Egypt-IMF relations after an IMF assessment of the Egyptian economy showed that it was on the road to recovery, with growth rates higher than projected and exports taking off. However, IMF endorsement of the country's economic policies, which is necessary for Egypt to obtain the last tranche of debt reduction that has been held up since 1993, is still being withheld pending the outcome of the upcoming negotiations.



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Opposition figures and political and economic analysts, speaking to **Mona El-Nahhas** and **Rana Allam**, rule out a policy shift following Kamal El-Ganzouri's appointment as prime minister, but some anticipate a faster pace of privatisation

## Faster privatisation

Around midnight on 4 January, Kamal El-Ganzouri completed the formation of his 32-member cabinet. The key portfolios of defence, foreign affairs, the interior and information remained in the same hands, but seven newcomers joined the cabinet, mainly filling portfolios dealing with finance, the economy and economic planning. Eight members of Atef Sidki's outgoing cabinet lost their jobs and three portfolios were merged with others — population was attached to the Ministry of Health, international cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and housing with the Ministry of Construction.

Opposition leaders, viewing the change as "limited", believe the new line-up will not lead to any major policy changes. However some interpret the concentration on change in economy-oriented portfolios as indicative that the pace of privatisation and the shift to a free-market economy will be stepped up.

But Adel Hussein, secretary-general of the Islam-oriented Labour Party, alleges that the changes in portfolios took place mainly for personal reasons. "It was Sidki who appointed the outgoing ministers of economy and finance because they were his personal friends, and not for any objective reasons," Hussein said. "With Ganzouri taking over, it was natural that new faces, more in line with his policies, would be brought in."

Hussein had been expecting a cabinet change following the recent elections. But in his view the changes did not amount to much. "A deputy prime minister [Ganzouri] was elevated to prime minister, and the bulk of the cabinet remained unchanged", he said. "I am not expecting any major changes in the coming period, and I expect the general policy to remain the same."

Yassin Serageddin, chief of the parliamentary group of the Wafid Party, which supports free enterprise, was optimistic that the new cabinet would speed up the shift to a free-market economy. "The outgoing cabinet was very slow in implementing privatisation", he said. "This, in addition to soaring prices and mounting taxation, was the main reason behind the change in the economic portfolios."

Serageddin expressed the hope that Ganzouri, with his contacts in the world's monetary institutions and his grasp of the requirements of the 21st century, would correct the course of economic reform. "Any changes will be limited to the economy. State policy, particularly foreign policy, will remain the same", he said.

Serageddin also approved of the merger of the various ministries as a step leading to greater policy coordination and reduced expenditure.

However according to Ragab Hemeida, secretary-general of the Liberal Party, the dividing, and then merging, of some portfolios reflected the state's lack of a clear vision.

"People had expected that the ministers who had remained in office for nearly 20 years would be changed," Hemeida said. "However, what happened in the reshuffle was contrary to all expectations."

Like Serageddin, Hussein Abdel-Razek of the leftist Tagammu Party believes that the new cabinet will accelerate the transition to a free-market economy. In his view, Ganzouri was appointed as prime minister because he is courageous enough to implement the second phase of the economic reform programme, which includes the privatisation of major companies and financial institutions".

## Getting reform back on track

Political and economic analysts agreed that under Ganzouri, who has a history of 14 years of cabinet service, the new administration would continue to follow in Atef Sidki's footsteps. Although they ruled out any major policy changes, some of them said the principal task of the new cabinet would be to reach agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and to "set the economic reform process back on track".

Mustafa Kamel El-Sayed, a professor of political science at Cairo University, does not believe that the change in the economic portfolios signals a change in economic policy. Ganzouri, he said, was deputy prime minister in the outgoing cabinet, and, as minister of planning for the past 14 years, was one of the architects of the nation's economic policies. Moreover, he led the Egyptian team in its negotiations with the IMF and the World Bank. "Therefore, it would be completely unreasonable to expect that the new cabinet would introduce changes in economic policy", El-Sayed said.

He said the fact that some portfolios changed hands "was probably due to the prime minister's wish to work with a group of people he knows well and can work smoothly with". He added that some former cabinet members were too close to the former prime minister to work with his successor.

Judging by precedents, the new cabinet will remain in office for a long time, El-Sayed said, because President Mubarak does not like to make changes in quick succession. "So, if the kind of political stability that the country has experienced for the past 15 years continues, one would expect the new cabinet to remain in its present form for years to come," he said.

Agreeing that no major changes should be expected, Salama Ahmed Salama, one of *Al-Ahram's* senior columnists, pointed out that the

new cabinet had been instructed by President Hosni Mubarak to build on what has already been achieved. However, he added, the main task of the new cabinet would be to reach a new agreement with the IMF.

To senior political analyst Lutfi El-Kholi, the cabinet changes amounted to no more than a "reshuffle of posts", and he expected no shift in policy. Since the days of President Gamal Abdel-Nasser, cabinet ministers have been technocrats running government departments, and have played no part in politics. Like El-Sayed, El-Kholi believes the new cabinet will remain in office for a long time to come.

Heba Handoussa, general manager of the Economic Research Forum, used different language to describe the new cabinet's principal task. Declaring that a possible policy change was not the main issue, she said that the goal was to set the economic reform process back on track. She described the new ministers with economic portfolios as "very competent" and said that they had been carefully chosen.

Economist Ismail Sabri Abdaillah, chairman of the Third World Forum, believes that the new ministers in charge of the economic portfolios are "very promising". And yet, he said, any change in economic policy "depends on the relationship between various groups in society. The minister of economy is not the only decision-maker; there is the cabinet and the president of the republic as well."

Alieddin Hilal, the dean of the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University, said it was too early to pass judgement on the new cabinet or to make forecasts. His attitude is that we will simply have to wait and see: "We will have to wait until the cabinet has had time to get into its work, then we will know," he said.

## Businessmen's 'lobby' in new Assembly

In an age of free enterprise, business is seeking political power. This was one of the conclusions to be drawn from the 1995 parliamentary elections, in which a large number of businessmen ran for office, and 41 of them won seats. Some are newcomers to the political scene, and their primary target appears to be the acquisition of parliamentary immunity. Others seem more interested in shaping the new market-oriented laws that will have a direct bearing on their business interests.

Rifaat El-Said, secretary-general of the leftist Tagammu Party, made a point of dividing the businessmen who ran for election into two categories. One group, he said, "cannot be called businessmen in the true sense of the word be-

A large number of businessmen contested the recent General Assembly elections, and many of them won seats. Why do entrepreneurs want to become parliamentarians? **Gamil Essam El-Din** analyses the new phenomenon

cause, as far as I can make out, they made their money by illegal means, such as smuggling, selling sub-standard food or trading in state-owned land." El-Said blamed this group for the acts of thuggery and vote-buying which were rampant in the 29 November ballot and 6 December runoff.

On the other hand, he added, "There is another group of genuine businessmen, highly respected for their large-scale enterprises. These people are members of the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the Wafid."

According to El-Said, the objective of the first group is political power and parliamentary immunity, while the second group is seeking a stronger influence in the formulation of new economic laws that directly affect their interests.

Yassin Serageddin, chief of the Wafid Party's parliamentary group, agreed with El-Said's assessment. Since the government was increasingly depending on the private sector to raise the volume of investments, he said, it was natural for businessmen to seek a greater say in shaping investment and market-oriented legislation.

In addition to the 41 businessmen who won seats, 16 are members of two

prominent business organisations: the Egyptian Businessmen's Association (EBA) and the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham). EBA members include Mahmoud Mohamed Abu-Nas (a wool blanket manufacturer), Amin Hammad (a public contractor and wood trader), Mamoud Thabet Meekhi (an exporter and importer of leather products), Mahmoud Azzam (a private contractor and also an import-export trader), Talaat Mustafa (another private contractor) and Mohamed Abul-Enein (a ceramics manufacturer). All of them are NDP members.

Parliamentarians who also belong to AmCham include Ala's Kamel Diab (executive manager of a group of five companies involved in petroleum services, land reclamation, electronics, contracting and urban development) and Ahmed Khairi (shipping and maritime activities, tourist and travel services and land reclamation).

The businessmen have managed to join some of the Assembly's key committees, enabling them to form a strong lobby. The 39-person economic committee includes 14 businessmen active in banking, foreign exchange, insurance and other economic spheres. According to the committee's chairman, Dr Mustafa El-Said, the committee will deal with a large amount of proposed economic legislation, including an anti-trust law, laws regulating chambers of commerce and foreign exchange, the unified investment law, the commercial markets law and a foreign trade law.

The 27-person plan and budget committee, which deals with customs regulations and taxes on investment projects, includes 11 businessmen. Eleven others, many of them public contractors, are serving on the 49-person housing committee. One of this committee's main tasks will be to discuss a new housing law which will revamp the apartment-rental system to encourage greater private investment in housing. Ten businessmen, most of them industrialists, are serving on the 46-person industry and energy committee.

In addition to the 41 businessmen who are Assembly members, 31 others have seats in the Shura Council.

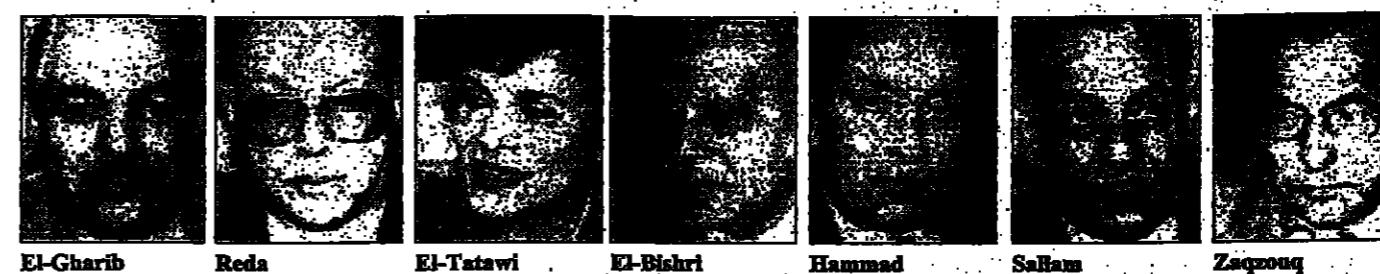
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The cabinet will meet every Wednesday under the chairmanship of El-Ganzouri, right, who appears above with Wali, Metwalli and Tantawi.



## Cabinet newcomers

Seven ministers have been appointed to the cabinet for the first time. They are:

**Mohieddin El-Gharib**

Minister of finance

Born in Cairo in 1937. Married with three sons. Received a university degree in economics in 1957, a master's in 1963 and a doctorate three years later. Participated in research for long-term planning at the Planning Institute and was appointed as adviser to the minister of economy's technical office in 1968. He also served between 1968 and 1972 as economic adviser to the General Organisation for Textiles. Between 1972 and 1978 he worked as director of projects for the Abu Dhabi Economic Development Fund and later as board member of the Joint Arab Investment Company. The last post he held before joining the cabinet was the chairmanship of the Arab Investment Bank and rose to be its board chairwoman in 1992. She was one of 10 people appointed by President Hosni Mubarak to membership of the People's Assembly in December.

**Saleiman Reda**

Minister of industry

Born in Cairo in 1936. Married with

two sons. After obtaining a degree in engineering from Cairo University in 1962, Reda worked for the Nasr Piping Company before joining the Egyptian Aluminum Company in 1972. He rose to be its board chairman in 1983 — a post which he continued to hold until he was appointed to the cabinet.

**Naival El-Tatawi**

Minister of economy and international cooperation

Born in Cairo. Married with two sons. Holds a degree in economics from the American University in Cairo (AUC) and master's and doctorate degrees from the University of Wisconsin. She began her career with the National Bank of Egypt before working as an economic expert for the United Nations and the World Bank. She later joined the Arab Investment Bank and rose to be its board chairwoman in 1992. She was one of 10 people appointed by President Hosni Mubarak to membership of the People's Assembly in December.

**Dr Ismail Salam**

Minister of health and population

Born in 1941 in Menoufia. Married with three children. Graduating from

**Zafer El-Bishri**

Minister of state for planning

Born in Cairo in 1931. One of the nation's top economic planning experts, he has lent his expertise to Sudan and the United Arab Emirates. In 1981, he became first under-secretary at the Ministry of Planning and was appointed vice-president of the National Investment Bank under Kamal El-Ganzouri in 1984.

**Talaat Hammad**

Minister for cabinet affairs

Born in 1934 in Daqahliya. After obtaining a law degree in 1955, he worked as assistant district attorney in various parts of Giza, Port Said and Cairo, later rising to be a judge and then chairman of the Alexandria Court of Appeals. In 1989, he was made secretary-general of the specialised national councils.

**Mohamed Zagzag**

Minister of Al-Azhar (religious endowments)

Born in 1933 in Daqahliya. Married with one daughter. Graduated from the Arabic Language Faculty of Al-Azhar University in 1959 and obtained a doctorate from Munich University in 1968. He taught at Al-Azhar's *Ustad Al-Din* (Religious Fundamentals) Faculty, later becoming its dean. He was appointed vice-president of Al-Azhar University two months ago. He has written 13 books on Islam and Islamic philosophy.

Compiled by **Nevine Khalil**

## Layoffs at US Embassy

The three-week partial shutdown of the US government has ended, but several Egyptian employees of the US Embassy have lost their jobs and others are worried, writes **Ghassan Shahine**

After forcing a partial shutdown of the US government for three weeks, the Republican-dominated Congress has approved legislation that will put 280,000 essential federal workers back in their offices on full pay until 26 January. Although the Republicans appeared to be making a small retreat from their hard-line strategy of using the cash-flow crisis to force President Bill Clinton's acceptance of their seven-year balanced budget plan, what will happen after January 26 remains unclear.

As a result of Congress' move, money has finally arrived at the US Embassy in Cairo, which, in the words of press attaché Rick Roberts, "had literally been operating without funding until the end of last week, with employees receiving only half-pay for the last pay period". Staff will be paid the remainder of their salaries by the end of this week. The consular section is back in business and the cultural centre's library will also reopen this week.

But because of the cash-flow problem, 28 Egyptian employees — 22 working for the State Department and six for the US Information Service (USIS) — have been laid off, Roberts said. The staff reduction process, he explained, has taken two forms: the furlough system applied to American civil servants, and the "reduction in force" (RIF) system, which is applicable to Egyptian employees of the US government. Under the furlough system, an employee's job is suspended for a certain period until the cash-flow problem is resolved, with the employee guaranteed full payment for the suspension period. But RIF means dismissal. The laid-off Egyptian staff receive a severance package, which includes severance pay amounting to two months' salary plus a month's salary for every year of employment, in addition to any holiday pay due.

While some of the laid-off employees have found consolation in the fact that

they had been dismissed because of budgetary problems and not for lack of efficiency, others felt their dismissal was discriminatory. They asked why the embassy had not given all its employees part-time jobs instead of dismissing some and keeping others, and why the Egyptian staff had been dismissed rather than furloughed.

"Egyptians cannot be furloughed as the Egyptian labour law does not allow it," countered assistant press attaché Robert Ogborne. Press attaché Roberts added that cutbacks are made according to complex objective criteria.

Employees are categorised according to their jobs by the personnel department. When a decision is made to reduce the number of jobs at a certain level, the personnel department starts the process of rating those who are doing similar functions according to their evaluation record over the past five years, the number of years they have served the federal government and the

speed with which they have been promoted. The required number of lay-offs are then made according to these criteria. In some cases, a whole programme is eliminated.

"It is a very difficult decision for a manager to lay off an employee," Roberts said. "No one likes to lose an efficient worker. So we often try to recommend them to other missions. We all hope this nightmare will end soon."

But it remains unclear whether there will be further federal staff cutbacks, whether money will continue to flow in and whether those who are back at work will continue to keep their jobs. It all depends on the final budget, which the White House and Congress should agree on by the 26th of this month.

"We are in a situation where it is difficult to project," said Roberts. "The administration, however, seems clearly committed to making the federal government staff smaller, at this moment no one can tell how much smaller."

## Al-Yassar back on the market

The leftist monthly *Al-Yassar* is back on the newsstands after financial problems forced a two-month halt in publication. **Khaled Dawoud** discovers how the magazine plans to survive

The leftist monthly magazine *Al-Yassar* (The Left), which folded in October because of financial problems, resumed publication at the beginning of January. Supporters of the magazine, which serves as a forum for Khalid Mohieddin's Tagammu Party, had opposed the shutdown. They charged that the party's weekly mouthpiece, *Al-Ahali*, could no longer properly be described as an opposition newspaper, because it was increasingly leaning towards the government line.

Hussein Abdel-Razek, *Al-Yassar's* editor-in-chief, said that he had been able to issue the magazine again despite having raised only 40 per cent of the required finance, because he had received further pledges of financial support. An association called 'Friends of the Left' has been formed, with each member promising to pay LE100 as an annual subscription. Abdel-Razek said that at least 500 people had promised to join the association. "This will provide us with LE50,000 annually, which is enough to cover our losses and ensure that publication will not be interrupted", he said.

Despite being 60 per cent short so far, he was optimistic "that more money will come in, and we will have more than 500 members in the association".

The January issue lasted out at the way the government had run the recent parliamentary elections, claiming that the widespread violence that had marred the balloting had dashed public confidence in democracy as a means of political change.

The same issue featured a new section on women's affairs, which, Abdel-Razek said, was an attempt to oppose calls by Islamists to keep women confined to the home. Another article, by Abdel-Razek, warned of alleged new plans for the Middle East which would strengthen the US presence in the region and assure the dominance of Israel.</p

# USAID grants under fire

Members of the People's Assembly last week sharply criticised two US grant assistance agreements aimed at supporting agricultural credit and research. Gamal Essam El-Din reports

The newly-elected People's Assembly kicked off its first session of the year by debating six US grants to various sectors in Egypt. But of the six, two, earmarked for the agricultural sector, the Agricultural Production and Credit Project (APCP) and the National Agricultural Research Project (NARP) came under fire by a number of opposition and independent MPs.

Arguing that US grants have consistently proven to have a negative impact on Egyptian farmers, El-Badri Farghali, an MP for the leftist Tammam party, said, "Before approving anything, we have to ask ourselves to what extent Egyptian farmers benefited from this kind of grant." He went on to say that usually most of the proceeds from these grants are used to extend loans to farmers at "oppressive" interest rates.

According to the NARP agreement report, the aim of the NARP grant, which has increased in value more than six times from \$30 million to \$194 million, is to upgrade and modernise research applications in Egypt to increase cultivation.

Ragab Hilal Hemeida, a Liberal Party MP, demanded that the Ministries of Agriculture and International Cooperation submit to the People's Assembly a report detailing the benefits offered Egyptian farmers by this type of grant.

"Now we are required to approve raising the amount of this grant from \$194 million to \$198 million, but before taking this step, we have to know exactly what is the impact of these grants on Egyptian farmers," said Hemeida.

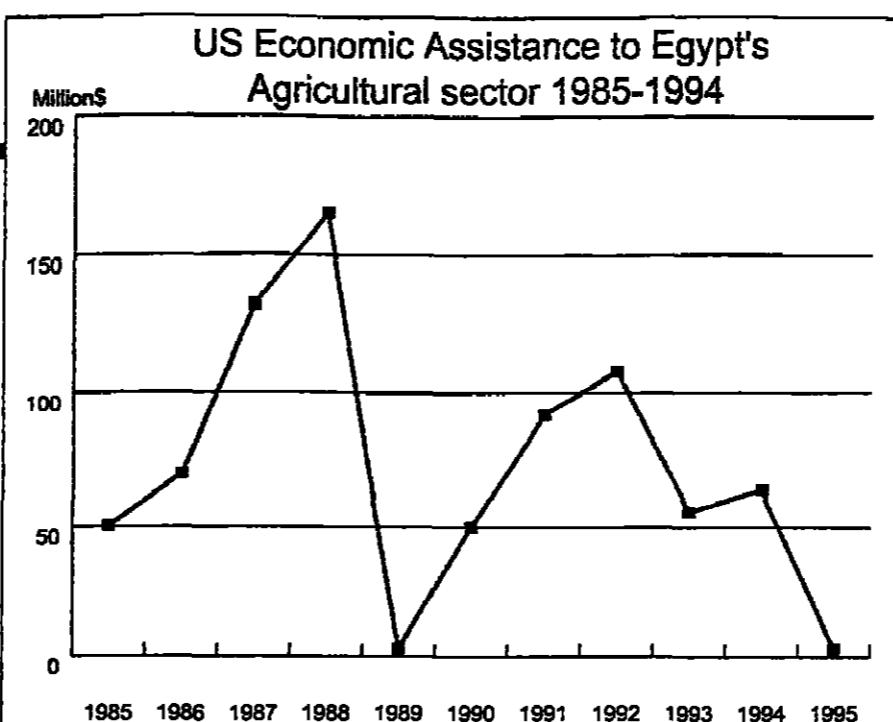
However, Ahmed Abu Zeid, leader of the ruling National Democratic Party's parliamentary bloc, lauded the grant, emphasising it would lead to high productivity, effective pest control, and to developing new varieties of crops.

With this, Abdel-Fattah El-Baradi, an independent from Al-Qarabiya province, begged to differ. He said the grant had not increased the productivity of the strategic crop, cotton. On the contrary, he contended, the production of cotton has been constantly declining over the last 10 years, falling from 3 million qantars in 1984 to 895,000 qantars in 1994.

The report on the APCP grant agreement also raised a few sceptical eyebrows. The objective of the APCP grant, whose value has increased from \$35 million in 1987 to \$309 million in 1995, said the report, is to upgrade the services provided to farmers by the Principal Bank for Development and Agricultural Credit (PBDAC) in terms of increasing the value of low interest loans and credit allocated to farmers.

This grant, said the report, has already increased the amount of loans provided to farmers to LES billion since the grant programme began, covering 70 per cent of the costs of crop production.

However, a number of members of the National Democratic Party and the opposition criticised this grant. Abdel-Rehim El-Ghoul, the NDP's MP for Qena, stressed that the PBDAC no longer gives low interest loans, showing that "PBDAC now acts like a commercial bank and



has nothing at all to do with development — except its name." As a result, he claimed, the USAID grants have actually increased the loan burdens on farmers. He called upon the Ministry of Agriculture to drop these loans.

Ali Fat'h El-Bab, the only Muslim Brotherhood MP, claimed that the loan was never used by PBDAC to give low interest loans. He said

interest rates on the PBDAC's loans to farmers had, in fact, jumped to 18 per cent, further encumbering the farmers. Faisal El-Sharkawi, an NDP MP from Gharbiya, added that this kind of grant is no longer viable because the government now considers the PBDAC as a commercial bank which has to transfer its profits each year to the Central Bank of Egypt.

There are growing signs that the international financial institutions (IFIs) are becoming increasingly impatient with the cautious pace of implementing growth-oriented reforms. This is especially true of the liberalisation of the foreign trade sector and the privatisation of the dominant public sector. Without rapid progress on these fronts, the World Bank believes that the growth necessary to sustain the macroeconomic adjustment thus far achieved will not be forthcoming.

The expansion of the private sector is the main objective of the second phase of adjustment. However, there are obstacles to the development of the private sector which are inextricably linked to the politics of the reform programme.

Under Sadat's *infitah*, a large-scale private sector began to develop, particularly through joint ventures, both in agriculture and industry. However, many have questioned the power of the emerging commercial bourgeoisie and its allies as well as the liberal character of the *infitah*.

Some have even gone as far as to say that the economic liberalisation process has been constrained by the commercial bourgeoisie's dependence on the state. But if the commercial bourgeoisie is weak and the *infitah* was not genuine liberalisation, then what was the logic of change? One answer ventured is that international factors driven by unsustainable levels of indebtedness brought about economic liberalisation.

While these international pressures are real enough, it is somewhat misleading to see them as somehow "external", as if the abolition of the IMF and the World Bank would obviate the need for adjustment or that debt write-off would solve Egypt's problems.

If reform started as an attempt to cope with the fiscal and foreign exchange constraints of the state-led model of development, how solid are the preconditions favouring a private sector-led model of development?

There are genuine doubts about the appropriateness of the strategy called for by the IFIs. It may be that the strength of the coalition of entitlements (for peasants, organised labour and the intelligentsia) which formed the social base of the import-substituting industrialisation (ISI) model is too strong, and the power of reform coalition too weak, to make reform politically feasible at the present time.

With regard to the reform agenda of the IFIs, it is possible to argue that things could and should be done differently. World Bank orthodoxy can be challenged on a number of grounds.

In the first instance, there is no significant empirical relationship between economic growth rates and reduced vulnerability to external shocks, on the one hand, and either outward oriented policies or export promotion and trade openness, on the other.

Besides, there is no simple relationship between outward oriented policies and either trade openness, or stable financial openness. Nor is there a direct relation between exchange rate policy and export shares and capital movements.

While it is true that trade openness does increase flexibility and the ability to cope with external shocks, financial openness may significantly reduce the ability to adjust to exogenous shocks. Equally, there is no unambiguous economic logic for a speedy reform process, nor for rapid privatisation of public assets.

More practically, both the comparative experience of the successful liberalisers that the World Bank identifies as models (Japan and the East Asian newly-industrialised countries), and economic theory suggest that there is a preferred order for optimum economic liberalisation.

Roughly, fiscal control comes first, followed by domestic financial liberalisation and price and trade reform, with privatisation of the banking system and the freeing of foreign exchange on the capital account coming last. The successful Asian economies only removed state control over domestic and international capital markets late in the day, having had very extensive controls during the ISI phase and their early experience with export promotion.

These considerations are of direct relevance to Egypt. The performance of state-owned enterprises has been negatively affected by adverse incentive structures as compared with the private sector. Again, the first stage of reform here is not to privatise, but to allow the public and private sector to operate on equal terms. Only when this, more or less, is accomplished can privatisation be unambiguously pursued.

In the case of foreign trade and investment, while it is right to turn quotas into tariffs, and to reduce these over time, there is also a large case for targeted export subsidies to support export growth. There is also a strong case for targeting specific sectors to open to foreign investment, and to impose exchange control and export requirements upon these activities.

In sum, while there is a good case for export promotion and trade liberalisation, the case for rapid privatisation, especially of the banking sector, and for full liberalisation of the capital account is not well founded in theory or in the comparative experience of successful late industrialisers.

Whatever strategy is appropriate, coalition building is both difficult and essential. The problem here has been that the constituencies mobilised and created by state-led ISIs were intransigent and nationalist, while structural adjustment is exclusionist and opens the economy to foreigners.

Support for reforms might be expected from public sector managers seeking greater autonomy and an opportunity to transfer their skills and assets to the private sector and from the private bourgeoisie. Capitalists will have to come from somewhere. Given the weakness of much of the private sector, and given also the split between the small and micro-informal sector and medium and large concerns, it is not obvious that a critical mass for reform exists. After all if Arab socialism founded because there were no socialists, what would be the fate of Arab capitalism without real capitalists?

The final and most basic impediment may be the character of the political system. The National Democratic Party remains a tool of government control rather than an agency of change, and the patron-client relations of corporatism continue to act as a brake on radical change. In addition, this kind of limited, pluralist accommodation of the bourgeois and elite interests makes impossible the negotiation of a social and political bargain with those who will bear most of the costs of reform: the workers, poor peasants and the urban poor.

Rather than push for democratic opening that might allow a reform programme to be negotiated with the population, the government and its international backers appear to have opted for muddling through reform in an indeterminate fashion, and if necessary, by an authoritarian response to the crisis.

It is the problem about the appropriate kind of reform, and those of forging a new pro-adjustment coalition, and perhaps most importantly, the fragmentation of power in the political system, rather than an abstract lack of commitment, which together explain the limits of the second phase of adjustment thus far. If this is so, then it strongly suggests that political reform is not an optional extra but a necessary prerequisite to economic success, if an authoritarian solution is to be avoided.

The writer is a professor in the Department of Politics at Leeds University.

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## New showpiece on the Nile

A new barrage across the Nile promises to do more than solve navigation problems in Upper Egypt. Amira Ibrahim went on a cruise to the site

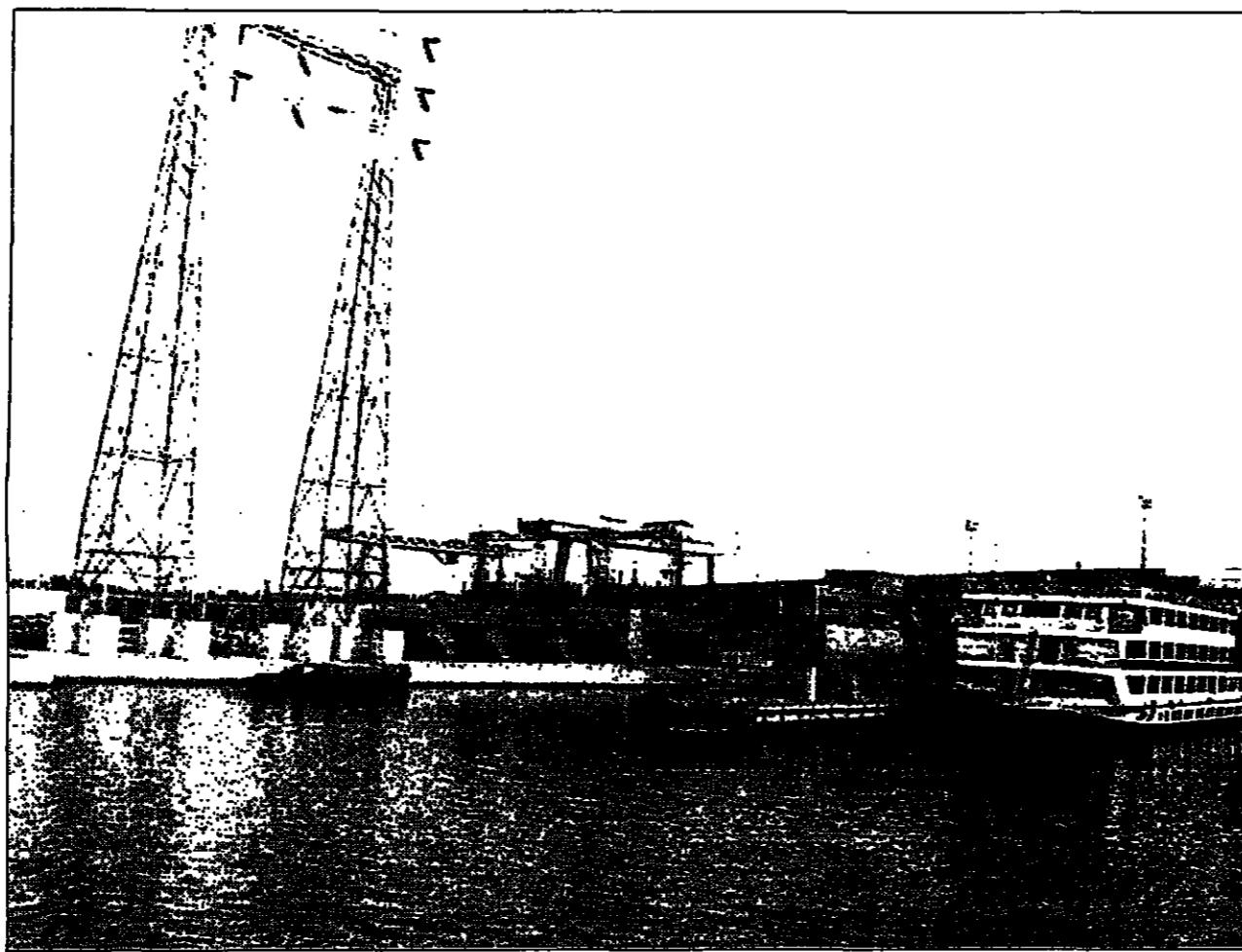


photo: Khaled El-Fiqi

Expediting Nile traffic, producing electricity and saving water are only some of the many benefits of a new LE650 million computerised barrage at Esna in Upper Egypt.

The new barrage, which came into operation in the summer, replaced an older one, built in 1908, which had been causing major problems upstream for navigation and irrigation and sparking electricity shortages.

Before the new project was finished, scores of Nile cruisers packed with tourists ran aground because of the low level of water at the old barrage, which also suffered from other defects including aging locks. Officials say the new barrier is expected to solve most of these problems.

"Nile cruisers used to spend hours in front of the old lock waiting for their turn to arrive," said Ibrahim Abdel-Farrag, the engineer in charge of the lock and spillway.

The old lock was designed to handle one middle-sized vessel which is 160 metres long and 17 metres wide, enables the simultaneous passage of two large ships in 25 minutes. It allows ships to pass through smoothly by efficiently controlling the level of water needed to allow the ships to go through," said Abdel-Farrag.

The computer-operated lock, which is 160 metres long and 17 metres wide, enables the simultaneous passage of two large ships in 25 minutes. It allows ships to pass through smoothly by efficiently controlling the level of water needed to allow the ships to go through," said Abdel-Farrag.

It is still here on the control panel which operates the lock electronically," Abdel-Farrag said.

In 1948, the old barrage was raised several metres to meet increasing irrigation requirements in both Aswan and Qena governorates in Upper Egypt. But several decades later, the amount of water being rerouted by the old barrier was

still not enough to satisfy the requirements resulting from the major agricultural expansion in the area.

The difference in water levels on either side of the barrage is also being exploited to generate electric power. "The

power plant in the new barrage is equipped with six bulb turbines which are much more advanced than those of the High Dam," said Raafat Ali Soliman, operating engineer at Esna Power Plant. According to Soliman, power generated from the new barrage reduces pressure on the High Dam power plant and meets the increasing requirements of the

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# Fatah versus Fatah

Controversy over candidates for the forthcoming Palestinian elections marks 'the opening shots in a struggle for Fatah's political soul,' writes Graham Usher from Jerusalem

"The main conflict in these elections is going to be between Fatah and Fatah," says Bassam Khader, a local Fatah activist from Gaza. The way the race is shaping up for Palestinians' first national suffrage to be held on 20 January suggests that he may be right.

On 5 January, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) appointed Central Elections Commission announced that there were 676 nominated candidates standing for the 88-seat Palestinian Council. Of these, a colossal 500 are running as "independents", mostly on the strength of being influential businessmen, clan leaders or national figures in one or other of the PNA's 16 designated electoral constituencies.

Of these independents, however, 150 are "unofficial" activists from Yasir Arafat's mainstream (and dominant) Fatah movement in the Occupied Territories who have chosen to stand against the "official" Fatah list of 75 candidates, approved by the Chairman himself.

The elections have brought to a head a crisis within Fatah's ranks which revolves less around ideology — the programmes of the "official" and "unofficial" candidates are virtually identical, and all are pro-Oslo and (ironically) pro-Arafat — than over what Fatah is or should become in the self rule. For many Palestinian analysts, it was a crisis waiting to happen.

Fatah's strength in Palestinian society is drawn from three main bases: loyalist elements of the PLO's old Tunis bureaucracy who are now functionaries in the PNA's various ministerial, civil and security apparatuses; the territorial traditional bourgeois and mercantile classes; and the generation of Fatah "fighters", who won their political spurs in the uprising, and whose weight lies in the poorer villages, refugee camps and prisons. The problem for Arafat with the elections was how to satisfy all three constituencies.

Last November, he formed a special 20-member Fatah "central committee" (FCC) whose task was to determine the final list of approved Fatah candidates. To this end, primaries by local Fatah groups were held across the West Bank and Gaza so that the FCC could "take into consideration" the choice of Fatah's grassroots organisation. But these primaries almost unanimously returned candidates representative of the activists rather than of the "outside" PLO or Palestine's elite families.

Fatah activists didn't want independents who support Arafat or Fatah in general", says West Bank Fatah leader, Marwan Barghouti. In the primaries, "they chose people from the movement who were active in the Intifada, who were in prison, who suffered from the occupation. These people are the best qualified to represent the Palestinian people."

But neither Arafat nor the FCC wanted this. Rather, says an "independent" Fatah candidate in Ramallah, Abdel-Fatah Hamayal, "the FCC's view was that the official list should contain well-known national figures, regardless of whether they are Fatah or not."

In the ensuing struggle over the list between the activists and the Arafat-appointed FCC, it was predictably, the latter which prevailed.

In Jerusalem, the FCC ignored the selection of its own Fatah members in favour of a "national unity bloc" made up of Islamist, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP) and "national figures" such as former PLO spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi. This bloc eventually fell apart with the decision by Hanan and the PLFP to boycott the elections, but the bitterness it caused among Fatah cadres in Jerusalem — especially those who were "dumped" in favour of non-Fatah candidates — has led at least two well-known Fatah activists to run as independents.

In Nablus, Arafat allegedly replaced the popular Intifada Fatah leader and ex-deportee, Husseini Khader, on the official list with representatives of the city's powerful capitalist class, such as Maher Massri and Shakir. The upshot is that Khader, along with four other Fatah grassroots leaders, has now formed a "Freedom and Independence" bloc to stand against official Fatah. And, in Ramallah, activists like Hamayal and the ex-prison leader, Qadura Fares — despite coming first and second in Fatah's primary for the city — were forced to stand aside on the official list in favour of millionaire Yaqub El-Sayegh and the PNA's current sports minister and member of the mid-scale Fida Party, Azmi Shuaibi. Both Hamayal and Fares are now running as independents, despite warnings from the FCC that "all unofficial Fatah candidates should withdraw or face expulsion from the movement".

These schisms are very likely the opening shots in a struggle over Fatah's future political soul, one where the main fault-line will be less along the old divisions of "inside" and "outside", or refugee and resident, than between those in Fatah who want it to become a modern political party and those who wish to preserve it as a "national" movement.

"I believe our decision to run [as independents] will strengthen Fatah's base in the Occupied Territories", said Hamayal, triggering a process where Fatah will be forced to adopt "clear social and economic policies" and have "leaders elected by the membership". Husseini Khader is not so sure. For him, the debacle over the official list between Fatah's "leadership" and its grassroots base spells the end of the movement. "Fatah is dead", he said. "It has been superseded by the PNA, by the new realities thrown up by the Intifada and Oslo."

The coming "contest between Fatah and Fatah" in the elections may well show which of these two prognoses is nearer the mark.



PLO leader Yasser Arafat and Hamas spokesman Mahmoud Zahar weep over the death of Hamas militant Yehya Ayyash, while Palestinians in the Gaza Strip pay their last respects (photo: AFP)

## The Engineer's final exit

A carefully timed explosion has blown away Hamas's top bomber, and much more besides, reports Julie Till

The death of Yehya Ayyash brought hundreds of thousands of Palestinians onto the streets in Gaza this week in protest at his assassination. "Peres, prepare your coffin," was the chilling response of those who took part in the funeral procession of "The Engineer," credited with a string of suicide bombings against Israeli targets.

For nearly three years, the former electrical engineering student topped Israel's wanted list, but managed to evade the security tentacles of Israeli intelligence — giving him almost mythical standing among his militant followers. That all came to an end on Friday, when a booby-trapped cellular phone exploded in his face.

"It is a criminal assassination with all the fingerprints of the Israeli Shin Bet," said former Minister of Planning and International Cooperation and Fatah election candidate Nabil Shaath in a telephone interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

It certainly bears the hallmarks of what Shaath describes as the

"vengeful attitude of the Israelis against those who have taken violent actions against them." In October, Islamic Jihad leader Fathi Shabiq was gunned down in Malta. Israel characteristically refused to deny or admit responsibility. In November of last year another Jihad activist, Hani Abed, opened his car door and was blown apart.

Mahmoud Zahar, Hamas spokesman in the Gaza Strip, told the *Weekly* that not only Islamist militants have come under fire. Activists from Hamas, Jihad, Fatah and even the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) have been killed by Israeli undercover units. The death of Ahmad Abu Rizik, a member of the Fatah Hawks, at the hands of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) two months after the FLO-Israel agreement was signed in Washington and one week after he was granted an amnesty by Israel, provoked huge unrest across the Gaza Strip in November 1993. Six pro-Oslo Fatah activists, were also killed in Jabaliya refugee camp in

March 1994 by an IDF undercover unit.

Ayyash was clearly a prime target for the Israeli security forces: "His assassination, as one of the heads of the Islamist military opposition, was at the top of Rabin's priorities before he died. It has now been achieved by the Shin Bet," Ibrahim Ghoshe, Hamas spokesman in Jordan, told the *Weekly*.

His death will also boost morale within the Israeli security establishment embarrassed by its failure to prevent the assassination of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. But the timing of Ayyash's death is significant for another reason. Ayyash's assassination comes only two weeks before the elections to the Palestinian interim council on 20 January.

In the self-rule areas, Ayyash's death marks a painful and embarrassing blow to the credibility of the PNA and to its claim to be the sole protector of Palestinians in the self-rule areas. It is a predicament which Hamas has been quick to ex-

ploit. At the funeral of Ayyash, Hamas leaders called for weapons confiscated by the authority to be returned. "Now everyone is sure that the PNA is unable to protect anyone. We have to look for ways to protect ourselves and that includes Fatah, JI and Hamas," argued Zahar.

Palestinians have "been plunged back into political uncertainty and economic instability after the recent euphoria surrounding the withdrawal of Israeli troops from six and a half towns in the West Bank. Israel, citing fear of reprisal attacks, has closed off the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in doing so around 50,000 Palestinian workers have been cut off from their jobs inside Israel and the transfer of goods has been held up at crossing points."

Ironically, Ayyash's killing follows a four-month lull in the cycle of violence. "It comes at a time when Hamas had decided to stop its violent actions and follow a peaceful road after our (PNA) meeting in Cairo," argued Shaath. While that may be reading it little too much

into the dialogue between Hamas and the PNA, there has been an unspoken moratorium on attacks in the self-rule areas. Such restraint is unlikely to persist.

Instead, the positive atmosphere following the reconciliation talks in Cairo has been replaced by angry recriminations. A Hamas leaflet, circulated in Gaza home after the killing, laid blame on the Israeli intelligence services, its "network of collaborators", and a weak PNA which "provided the hole in the wall of the Palestinian people through which these services entered".

The consequences are all too predictable. Israeli Police Minister Moshe Shahal said after the killing, "We certainly breathe easier for the fact that Yehya Ayyash is no more." But the question is for how long. In a fax to the Reuters agency in the Gaza Strip, Hamas set the clock ticking: "Let the occupying invaders and their stooges await the response to the Zionist crime," it said.

## Bowing to billions

The long history of respect for human rights and for freedom of expression, in which Britain has always taken such pride, was forced to bow to commercial interests when the British authorities decided to expel the London-based Saudi dissident Mohammed Al-Mas'ari recently.

The Home Secretary clearly stated that the decision was taken after the Saudis had threatened British firms with the loss of billions of pounds sterling in arms contracts consequent to the Yamamah deal concluded in 1985.

"Our government exists to advance and protect the interests of the people of the UK," he said a few days after the decision. "That is what we are there to look after, and that includes the jobs and people of the UK, and that is an entirely legitimate consideration."

The Yamamah deal brings in annual earnings of 2 billion sterling, and guarantees 700,000 jobs.

Prime Minister John Major said that the decision was taken out of concern for Saudi stability. "Mr Al-Mas'ari is an illegal

immigrant, who has used hospitality in this country to wage a campaign to try to bring down the Saudi regime... The stability of the Gulf is very important. The Saudi Arabian position is fundamental to the stability of the whole Gulf" he said.

Mas'ari, who came to Britain in 1994, has waged a campaign alleging corruption in the Saudi royal family through the London-based Committee for Defence of Legitimate Rights (CDLR).

The Saudi royal family were annoyed by his activities, and appealed to the British authorities to expel him. Britain tried to expel him to Yemen last year, but failed on the grounds that it would not be safe for him. However, this year they chose to expel him to the quiet Caribbean island of Dominica. He was given an ultimatum to appeal against the decision by January 16 or else to appear at Gatwick airport.

However Mas'ari, who is now appealing, said that his expulsion would not stop the CDR's activities. The expulsion is regarded as a blow to all London-based Arab opposition groups.

Leith Kobba of the Iraqi Islamic Imam Khawqi Institution believes that, undoubtedly, the Arab opposition will feel "less secure" and "more worried" about their futures in England. He ascribed this to the fact that Britain, which has been distinguished by its respect for human rights and freedom of expression, is now "shaking the freedoms it offers to

of the UK came first; when it came to Britain's relations with other countries, he would not allow any person to jeopardise them.

Kamal El-Helbawi, spokesperson of the banned Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood said that certainly every opposition group would now reconsider its case and think about its future in Britain. However, he added that the law was not against opposition groups working in Britain; as long as they did not break the law, the authorities would not have any valid reason for casting them. "Britain still honours its long history of respect for human rights. They gave Mas'ari 10 days to appeal, unlike Abacha (in Nigeria), or the Arab regimes," he said.

He thinks that Britain's decision to expel Mas'ari was due to many pressures of a specific economic nature from Saudi Arabia, and by extension, irritates arms exporters in Britain. The government was therefore forced to expel Mas'ari in an attempt to save British Saudi arms deals.

The second dimension is the principle of expulsion itself, which has now been set as a precedent in the British government's dealings with the Arab opposition in Britain. "The next step could be the expulsion of a Bahraini opposition group that has recently arrived in England. The Bahraini government is exerting every effort on the British government to expel them. Although Britain has refused in the past, given that it has decided to expel Mas'ari, it could do the same to the Bahraini group and others," he added.

Azzem Sultan of the Freedom of the Muslim World (a British Muslim Forum) said that if the government succeeded in removing Mas'ari, it would be a serious precedent in the authorities' dealings with other asylum seekers. He added that it would also encourage the British government to proceed with amendments to restrict the freedom of political activists.

The [recent] bill on immigration happens to be part of a policy that has materialised over the past few years to save money and to decrease the number of asylum seekers. It is a clear trend in all of Europe, not only in Britain," he said.

With this case becoming a political issue inside Britain, Sultan predicts that public opinion will be on the side of Mas'ari, and that it will eventually prevent the government from proceeding with any amendments to the freedoms that British people have long taken pride in.

However, the British decision to deport Mas'ari, with the aim of silencing his campaign against the Saudi government, seems to be having the opposite effect. Mas'ari is now becoming a media superstar, and many people who had never previously heard of him, are now keen to follow his activities, even when he moves to the quiet Caribbean island of Dominica.

## Disappointing speculation

Though the new Algerian cabinet includes new Islamist faces, the reshuffle has disappointed some, writes Amira Howewly

Two months after taking office, Algerian President Liamine Zeroual formed his first government on Friday following several days of intense speculation. The minimal changes he made in the reshuffle, however, have disappointed some observers.

The 31-member cabinet includes 13 ministers from the former transitional government, which President Zeroual headed for the last two years. The remaining 18 include only four opposition party figures, three of whom represent the Islamic trend.

In the changes, Ahmed Murani, a breakaway founder member of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), has been designated minister of religious affairs; Noureddine Bahbouth from Hamas becomes minister of agriculture and fisheries; and Abdell-Qader Hamito, also a Hamas member, minister of small and medium enterprise.

It is rumoured that several senior opposition leaders had rejected offices offered by the new cabinet.

Though the inclusion of the Islamists is a significant change of policy, for some observers it does not go far enough. They argue that Hamas' two cabinet positions will not provide the group with much political weight. At the same time, Hamas has been accused of tarnishing the image of the Islamists in its rush to take posts in the government. Ahmed Murani's inclusion also does not come as a great surprise; he was a member of the Transitional Council after rejecting what he termed the "FIS' policy of violence".

Hamas leader Moustapha Nehmeh, however, argues that the two ministers appointed from his party are "economically and strategically important to the government." The ministry of fisheries, said Nehmeh, is responsible for international agreements and regional communications, while the ministry of small and medium enterprise is concerned with the transformation of the state socialist system to a free market economy. Perhaps most importantly for Algeria's young population, this ministry will have to construct an employment policy to provide vocational training and jobs.

Mohamed Aminour, a prominent Algerian intellectual, told the *Weekly* that the "big promises" which accompanied the presidential elections had triggered hopes for "real change". But, he commented, "the reshuffle did not respond to the hopes of the Algerian people. They wanted to see all sectors of society represented in the cabinet."

Such criticisms aside, President Zeroual confidently announced last Sunday that the primary goals of the new government would be to "fight injustice and pursue a policy of tolerance with extremists". He also plans "economic reform along with social justice".

One major challenge facing the government is its preparation for the forthcoming parliamentary elections. The exclusion of much of the opposition from the cabinet reshuffle has left some observers doubtful about how willing the government is to give the opposition a chance at power.

Dialogue with the FIS is expected to continue under Prime Minister Ouyahia. Over the past two years, in his former post as personal assistant to Zeroual, Ouyahia has been negotiating at length with FIS leaders, and he is said not to support the army's cancellation of the 1991 elections and the banning of the FIS.

Ouyahia, who comes from the largely Berber region of Kabylie, is also expected to open channels of communication with the secularist Front for Socialist Forces (FSF) and the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), which have large Berber followings. Observers argue that these groups will play an important role in the upcoming elections.

This reshuffle seems, however, to have done little to build consensus on Algeria's future, and discontent with solutions presented by the political authorities remains. It is an unease compounded by the killings reported daily in the Algerian press.

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دفعة ١٥٢

## Saudi oil production to inject US\$25 billion in 1996

REGULAR Saudi petroleum exports are expected to bring in US\$25.185bn of revenues, representing 72 per cent of revenues required by the 1996 balance of the kingdom. The Middle East Economic Survey, distributed in Cyprus, stated that if Saudi Arabia is able to maintain a profit margin of \$11.50 per barrel, the daily exports of 60mn barrels will inject \$25.85bn into the kingdom. The kingdom produces 8mn barrels per day, with a local consumption of 900,000 barrels per day.

# MONEY & BUSINESS



## Limited oil production increase

THE MONTHLY report issued by the information centre of the council of ministers indicated a limited increase in oil production in the early months of 1995 which reached 151,000 tonnes representing a 3 per cent growth rate over the previous year.

The volume of local consumption of oil reached 20,596 million tonnes which represent half the volume produced in 1995.

The report also showed an upward production trend in 1995 except in August/September.

## NBE records the highest profitability in 1994/1995

THE NATIONAL Bank of Egypt (NBE) has recorded the highest profitability among public sector commercial banks with a surplus available for distribution of LE100mn representing 39.3 per cent of the aggregate surplus of all public sector commercial banks. Besides, total footings as of 30 June 1995 mounted to LE77.2bn of which deposits grip LE35.3bn and loans and investments LE28.3bn.

The sound and outstripping performance was coupled with a tendency towards a more solid capital base and healthier capital adequacy ratios squaring with international standards. NBE's capital and reserves grew by 6 per cent to reach LE1.8bn while provisions increased by 22 per cent to reach LE4.2bn.

In The Banker's issue of November 1995, NBE came on top of all Egyptian banks and number 11 of the greatest 100 Arab banks.

The bank's success in mobilising savings reflects its sound strategy based on introducing new saving pools tailored to meet the needs of various income brackets and divergent customers.

Moreover, NBE's network of branches (315 branch-

es throughout the country) has played a crucial role in attracting deposits to total LE35.3bn representing 33.7 per cent of total public sector commercial banks.

On the other hand, NBE is the exclusive issuer of the biggest pool in Egypt, namely the savings certificates with its three groups.

Net sales of the said certificates since their first introduction in 1965 to June 1995 totalled some LE17.7bn.

The bank's success in attracting savings has had its positive repercussions on financing different economic sectors, fueling thus loans to total LE28.3bn representing 33.8 per cent of total public sector commercial banks.

NBE sustained its support to the productive sectors by injecting loans to the industrial and agricultural sectors totalling LE6.6bn and LE285mn recording an increase of 12 per cent and 9 per cent respectively against the previous year.

In line with its ambitions strategy oriented towards piecemeal transition to universal banking, the bank embarked upon providing traditional and non-

traditional banking services and wedging the activities of both commercial and investment banks together so as to stand fierce competition envisaged during the coming stage in the framework of trade liberalisation, universal banking, merging and colossal banking entities.

In fact, NBE has already adopted this trend since the beginning of the seventies by extending Investment trustee services and providing all proxy activities on behalf of its customers including feasibility studies as well as company incorporation and evaluation. Moreover, NBE holds equity participation in 85 different economic enterprises with a total capital of LE10bn.

In line with its constant endeavours to cope with banking technology, NBE has tilted its activities towards expanding the scope of non-traditional activities, promoting investments, developing the capital market and extending personal banking services.

On the international arena, NBE has assured its presence in the international markets via its wholly-owned National Bank of Egypt, London and its equity

participation in the African American Bank, New York in addition to its representative office in Johannesburg, South Africa and an extensive network comprising 1300 correspondents worldwide.

**MARITIME TRANSPORT COMPANY  
EGYPTIAN NAVIGATION COMPANY  
2, EL NASR STREET, ALEXANDRIA,  
EGYPT  
RE-ANNOUNCEMENT FOR SALE OF  
VESSELS BY AUCTION  
THE COMPANY RE-ANNOUNCES  
SALE OF THE VESSELS MENTIONED  
HEREAFTER (SEPARATELY)  
LOCATED AT ALEXANDRIA PORT ON  
THE CONDITION THEY ARE AT  
THEIR PRESENT LOCATION**

VESSEL'S NAME	AMON	EL AMRIA
TYPE	GENERAL CARGO	GENERAL CARGO
DATE OF BUILD	1978	1973
NAME OF SHIPYARD	ALEXANDRIA YARD (EGYPT)	PORT SAID YARD (EGYPT)
L.O.A	130 M	100.09 M
BREADTH	17.80 M	14.60 M
G.R.T.	8232 TONS	4240 TONS
N.R.T.	2801 TONS	2038 TONS
D.W.T.	5890 TONS	3,254 TONS
BASIC PRICE	USS 1540000	USS 470000
DATE OF AUCTION	25/1/1996	30/1/1996

### TERMS OF AUCTION

- 1- BIDDER HAS TO DEPOSIT THE SUM OF US\$ 50 000 FOR EACH VESSEL
- 2- TAXATION CARD IS COMPULSORY FOR EGYPTIAN BIDDERS.
- 3- TERMS, TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS AND GENERAL CONDITIONS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM THE PURCHASING SECTOR AGAINST US\$ 50 000 FAX. NO. 4831345 - 4831656.
- 4- VISIT AND SURVEYING OF VESSELS ALLOWED DURING WORKING HOURS FROM TODAY UP TO AUCTION DATE.
- 5- AUCTION WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE HEAD OFFICE, 2 EL NASR STREET, ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT AT THE ABOVE MENTIONED DATES AT 12 NOON LOCAL TIME

## Training programme

**UNITED** Specialists Co. announced the offering of its comprehensive training programmes for 1996, suited to the needs of different organisations operating in a wide range of fields. These programmes will be held in a number of European and Arab countries, including England, Cyprus, Egypt, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. Both short and long-term programmes will be available, which, according to Mohammed Rida, operations manager of United Experts in the Middle East, will help participants gain knowledge and develop acquired skills.

Programmes such as these assist different organisations and companies in implementing plans to develop their labour force and develop employment structures.

Khalid Attiya, deputy general manager of United Experts in Saudi Arabia, said that the training philosophy relies on assisting companies in defining their training needs and designing programmes to develop and expand employment structures via customised programmes, using the most modern and comprehensive training techniques.

## NABIL HELMI, manager of Guar-

antee for Marketing and Development, explained that an exhibition of industrial supplies and equipment will be held for the first time in Egypt, which is intended to serve a wide range of sectors required by the nation in its policy of boosting and raising its services until Egyptian

production standards are able to compete with those in foreign markets.

The idea of the exhibition is new, and will be held at 10 Ramadan City, a literal fortress of industry in Egypt. Because we believe that these services must be offered to the industrial cities. All investors and factory managers are strongly urged to visit

### Business news

#### India demands less trade tariffs

SOUTH Asian nations should lower trade tariffs and work on forming a regional trading bloc, an Indian government minister said Monday.

Commerce Minister P. Chidambaram said the seven members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, should consider identifying goods that would not qualify for lower trade tariffs.

Other goods, he told a meeting of the South Asian commercial ministers, could qualify for lower trade tariffs.

The steps would expand

on a move by India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives to offer each other lower tariffs on 226 products as part of the South Asian Preferential Trading Agreement, which came into effect in December.

Chidambaram also said the seven nations of the SAARC should offer each other zero near zero tariffs on trade in primary commodities and remove quantitative restrictions as well. Primary commodities account for 64 per cent of intra-SAARC trade, he said.

But Chidambaram said the group must take further steps to reach its goal of setting up a free trade zone, preferably by the year 2000 but at least by 2005.

#### Canadian trade deals with India

CANADIAN Prime Minister Jean Chretien, premier of 7 provinces and scores of business leaders embarked Monday on a two-week trade mission to India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia.

With 308 businesses participating, it is among the largest trade missions ever to visit the region.

Chretien is expected to sign trade deals with companies in Asia worth an estimated US\$1.5bn to Canadian business.

In 1994, Chretien headed a large trade mission to China. Only about 40 per cent of the \$7bn in deals signed in China have led to final contracts so far. Hui federal officials say that is a good success rate, given that it can take years to finalise deals in China.

## Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt

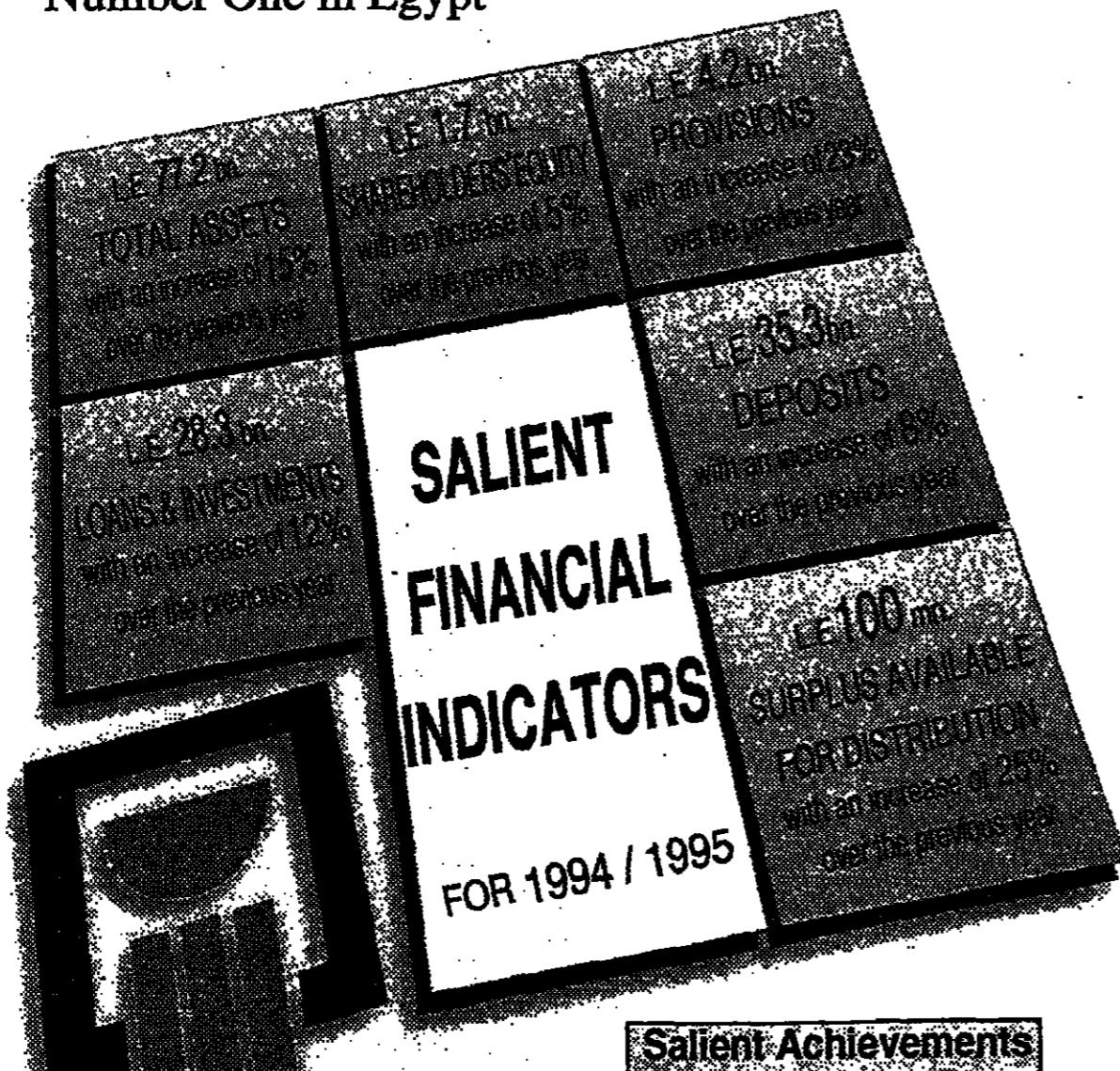
The volume of financing provided by Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt since its launch for agriculture related ventures and animal production projects totaled LE 1.5 billion. This financing is channelled towards the purchase of required materials and the construction of the production line.

Faisal Islamic Bank is a shareholder in many agriculture and animal production companies. Shares are worth LE 23 million.

Company	Activity
- Islamic Co. for animal production (El Qanater El Khairia)	- Poultry and eggs production
- Fotco - Ismailia National Co. for food processing	- Land reclamation and cultivation, drying, freezing and packaging of vegetables, processing of fruit juices
- El Sharq Al Awsat for land reclamation (Gisr El Suis - Baqar Sq - Heliopolis)	- Cultivation and reclamation of land - growing poultry, producing fodder and fertilizers
- El Giza Co. for agriculture related industries (Zawia Abu Muslim - Abul Numrus - Giza)	- Dairy products, cultivation and reclamation of lands.

## NATIONAL BANK OF EGYPT

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- Financing and participating in capital intensive infrastructure projects besides providing medium and long term credit.
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- Sponsoring banks' participation in real estate and tourist development.
- Establishing huge projects in cooperation with other financial institutions and offering a portion of their shares to public subscription with a view to stimulating the private sector.
- Supporting the Egyptian exporter domestically and abroad and providing state of the art Information technology and financing network.
- Providing private banking for prime customers.
- Linking Cairo branches by a single network.
- Rendering all newly innovated banking products to promote development and growth.

# Le Pen feeds on poverty

Plunging public morale and deepening social unrest permit the French fascists to orchestrate a campaign of terror, writes Faiza Rady

While on the campaign trail last spring, presidential candidate Jacques Chirac spoke of protecting the poor and defending the welfare programme. At the time, he also vowed to make unemployment the "priority of priorities" and accused those who focused on the budget deficit of "exaggerating". Now, six months later, President Chirac is singing to a different tune.

Having reneged on his prior commitments, Chirac's resolve to slash social security benefits triggered militant strikes that paralysed the country for close to one month. Behind that autumn's wave of strikes is Chirac's determination to reduce the current five per cent budget deficit to three per cent to enable France to qualify for the single European currency in 1999.

Although the strikes seem to be winding down after the railway and metro workers' demands were met, the social crisis is a long way from being resolved. While sociologists refer to an ambient, deep-seated "malaise" and compare this autumn's strikes with the legendary May 1968 labour-student uprising, then student leader Daniel Cohn-Bénédit disagreed. Comparing the two struggles, he explained that the '68 generation fought to determine their future, whereas people now protest the *loss* of their future. Cohn-Bénédit's interpretation was almost echoed in *Newsweek*: "Social unrest has yet to reach the furore or revolutionary ardour of May

1968," wrote Marcus Mabry. "After those days of rage, France forged a new social contract. Today's tumult marks the *death* of that contract."

In effect, governments of the right and left have progressively dismantled the welfare state by adopting neo-liberal economic policies over the past two decades. In France, like elsewhere, the market economy determines a growing social disparity as the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. "Compounded and reproduced social inequalities form a system trapping an increasing number of people, who insidiously lose their rights and their citizen's status," wrote socialist scientist Alain Bihl.

Statistics indicate that the impoverishment of the working class, in particular, has recently caused an upsurge in racially motivated crimes and increased worker support for the fascist National Front (NF) Party of Jean-Marie Le Pen. While Le Pen's proportional gains at the polls in last May's presidential elections were not significantly up on '88 — 15.07 compared with 14.39 per cent — his social support base has shifted from lower-middle class to working class. In 1988, the professional, small business, artisan and farmer vote pattern showed a proportionally higher tendency than the general population to vote NF. At the time, Le Pen won about one-third of the small entrepreneur and artisan vote. Comparatively, the recent pres-

idential election results do not show any real Le Pen gains among this class, but demonstrate the development of his working class base. Since '88, labour support for the NF leader has increased by 11 per cent and this year, 27 per cent of the workers voted for him. Le Pen even scored ahead of Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin's 21 per cent and far ahead of Communist Robert Hue, who only captured 15 per cent of the labour vote. Moreover, opinion polls indicate that 33 per cent of the socio-economically marginalised and politically disadvantaged fa-

vour the NF. Le Pen successfully manipulates this anxiety — the fear of being next in line — by targeting alien Arabs and Africans who allegedly cause unemployment by flooding the market and usurping jobs that should rightfully go to the French. He also blames the foreigners for the decaying moral fabric, the deteriorating infrastructure and the rising crime rate.

Since Le Pen's meteoric rise to political prominence in the June '84 European elections, his party has been steadily progressing at the polls. Comparisons between the NF and Nazi discourses have by now become standard. Like the historical German and Italian brands of fascism, NF ideology exploits the working class's deep fear of losing their hard-gained livelihood. Moreover, those who are totally destitute are highly visible, their misery palpable. Like elsewhere, thousands of the homeless roam the harsh city streets of France, anxiously on the look-out for the next precarious shelter, the next soup kitchen — desperately surviving. With unemployment rates soaring from three per cent in the early '70s to the current 12 per cent, youth unemployment reaching the 24 per cent level

and close to one million people on the welfare rolls, workers' fears are made tangible.

Le Pen successfully manipulates this anxiety — the fear of being next in line — by targeting alien Arabs and Africans who allegedly cause unemployment by flooding the market and usurping jobs that should rightfully go to the French. He also blames the foreigners for the decaying moral fabric, the deteriorating infrastruc-

# Policing Britain's blacks

The racial riots in the London suburb of Brixton last month caught the headlines. But, stereotyping Britain's blacks as criminal — like some top police officers did — will not do, argues Herman Ouseley

Making communities less criminally inclined is a long-term haul, particularly in diverse societies where there is relative poverty and high unemployment. Alternative youth cultures and racism are also prominent features. It is even more so in a city like London which is the most ethnically and culturally diverse capital city in the world.

Sir Paul Condon [Chief of London's Metropolitan Police] called the shots when he declared his hand and went for broke by playing the race and crime card. That is why he refused to back down from his stance of insisting that young black people and street crimes were synonymous. He refused to apologise to anyone at anytime for the torture caused by his statements in his operation "Eagle Eye" devised to trap the "muggers". It was a clever sting. His first to neutralise the inevitable retaliatory blow.

Not that the retaliation would be that formidable. Most people are decent enough and law-abiding and want all crimes of violence, including racially motivated violence, and burglaries eliminated. Policing London successfully requires not only good, honest, and clever police officers, but community sensitivity. It is analogous to a marathon: if you sprint too soon you could "burn out" before the finishing line.

Perhaps [London's] Metropolitan Police anticipated the response: Maybe they knew the risks, the likely reactions and felt they were on a winner. After all, there were three key goals. First to get the rank and file police officer to feel good about the new "stop and search" activities. Why were black people being stopped and searched in such disproportionately high proportions compared to white people? Sir Paul's letter provided the answer; the comfort, the confidence, the commitment and the assurances needed.

Secondly, public opinion was needed to reinforce the notion that the police were going to catch the criminals. Hoorah! And, as the public were telling police that street criminals were predominantly black so why chase anyone else? The headlines targeted anyone of colour and drew them into the net of vulnerability. Two nil!

Thirdly, it opened up a wider debate about the causes of crime. One employment and exclusions from school are just two factors that disproportionately affect black young men. Although this represents a risk of "political correctness" it would be worth taking, because it would provide a chance to engage the black community in meaningful dialogue about the underlying causes and their responsibilities.

If the black community refused to co-operate they would be accused of burying their heads in the sand, refusing to recognise and respond to the facts, and doing nothing to solve increasing criminal tendencies in the black community. In other words, they had to be part of the problem. Game, set and match. Well, almost!

It seems that Sir Paul may have achieved his initial goals but the real prizes are yet to be won. The initiation is not a sprint.

Very few black people who were invited to meet with Sir Paul failed to do so. There was much huffing and puffing but most people either turned up to hear what he had to say or had private briefings and tendered their apologies for not attending the formal meeting on 28 July. That meeting itself was noted more for its media hype. In fact, the whole scenario has provided a boon for the media, and high profile exposure for Sir Paul. It also enabled Bernie Grant MP, notably the black spokesperson on policing matters in London, to lead the challenge on behalf of the law-abiding silent majority of black Londoners.

Bernie Grant, more than anyone else, has maintained consistent public opposition against the Metropolitan Police's demonising of black people as a whole through Sir Paul's initiative — as orchestrated by the mass media.

However, by the end of the day Sir Paul Condon dominated all the headlines and his triumphalist agenda was the one being heralded by virtually all sections of the media.

The wider agenda is very critical. As Aubrey Rose, the Deputy Chair of the Commission of Racial Equality (CRE) said when attending the briefing: "You might arrest and convict 300 people for street crimes — but even if you manage to lock them up there will be more taking their places unless we sort out the deep-seated underlying problems."

What is being done to make parenting an issue in the curriculum? What support programmes are available in schools — especially primary schools to assist those children labelled as "difficult", "withdrawn" or "aggressive"? These children often come from high-rise, low-income housing blocks, experiencing a combination of domestic violence, poverty, unemployment, abuse, social deprivation, few positive male role models, low self-esteem, and racism.

They come from both white and black homes, but racism affects black boys in particular who are excluded from schools at four times the rate of white boys, and are three times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than white boys. That vulnerability affects them persistently, so much so, that in London more than six out of every ten black males aged 16-24 are out of work.

Racism sadly remains an issue in both education and policing. Ask any of the community organisations that work on exclusions from school. The number of racial discrimination complaints against the police is another indicator of a problem that the Metropolitan Police still has to come to terms with.

What is clearly emerging is that the wider agenda, cleverly initiated by Sir Paul Condon, is the most important aspect of tackling crime in London and elsewhere. The community, including black people, are fed up with all sort of crimes and want them reduced. There is support for the police in tackling crime. But, there would be considerably more support for the police if they were to demonstrate their intention to be fair and not criminalise the innocent or stereotype groups of people.

There has been no attempt to criminalise white people because they are disproportionately involved in child pornography, sexual crimes, homicides, burglaries and serious fraud. Nor should there be such an attempt. Was it not Sir Paul Condon who said he was not interested in skin colour?

Indeed, the Metropolitan Police would appear to have scored an own goal by failing to utilise positively, the excellent role models among black police officers in London. We need to see many black people, especially black men, in their true light as making positive, law-abiding contributions to the social, cultural and economic well-being of Britain. The monitoring and role model projects proposed will accentuate the positive views and actions among our young people of all backgrounds and, hopefully, isolate the negative minority from the rest.

It will be a long haul and right now the winning line still seems a long way ahead. But if we work together, supporting and supporting each other with mutual respect and understanding, we will all be the winners.

The writer is chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality in Britain.



British policemen guard a Brixton street in south London, 14 December, during violence and looting which left 10 people injured including three members of the police. The unrest followed the peaceful demonstration against the death in custody of Wayne Douglas — a black Briton. The riots in Brixton in 1995 were far less violent than those that took place a decade ago, but they did point to the discontent of a large section of Britons of African descent who feel marginalised and oppressed (photos: AFP and AP)

## Time for change

America desperately needs a change in its black-white relations. David Du Bois explains why a former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus may be just that

The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) is the premier civil rights organisation in the United States, at least for those who identify civil rights with the rights, civil and human, of African Americans. That is why the recent appointment of Kwesi Mfume, former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus and Maryland representative in Congress, as executive director of the NAACP is an important development.

The NAACP was the idea of a group of liberal whites following a particularly gruesome lynching in 1909 of a black man in Springfield, Illinois, the longtime residence of Abraham Lincoln. Earlier, in 1905, W E B Du Bois, a then young, black scholar, had formed a protest body, the Niagara Movement, with a group of northern African Americans. Du Bois had achieved notable attention in academia as a result of a 10-year cycle of studies of the African American at a small, black college in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1909 the Niagara Movement was invited to merge with a New York group of whites at its organising conference to establish a permanent body dedicated to the advancement of coloured people.

Some leaders of the Niagara Movement, suspicious of white leadership, refused to agree to such a merger. However, Du Bois, seeing this association as broadening and strengthening the black struggle, agreed to be one of the five founding members and managed to persuade most of the membership of the Niagara Movement to go in with him. This early expression of differences between black leaders regarding the role of white liberals in the black struggle has characterised the black movement throughout its history. Its dramatic expression during the 1960s civil rights struggles in the south caused consternation, frustration and finally rejection by many white liberals unwilling to accept black leadership of their efforts in the interest of African Americans. Kwesi Mfume, entering the board of the NAACP as executive director at this time, could force this issue to the fore in the NAACP.

The NAACP has operating branches in every major city or town and many small towns across the nation. Up to the 1960s civil rights movement, it was the membership dues and dime, quarter and one dollar donations of ordinary black folk that sustained the organisation. Local NAACP branches and leaders, sometimes to

the consternation of the national office, were always a force in the turbulent civil rights battles of the 1960s. However, the white backlash that characterised the decades of the 1970s and '80s — what Stephen Steinberg calls the "white ethnic renaissance" in his important book *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* — compelled the organisation to depend on financial help from outside the black community.

This began a period of political retreat together with top-level mismanagement, shockingly poor judgement and internal sexist harassment culminating in the acquisition of a \$4.5 million debt, partly the result of lavish spending on personal perks by the chairman of the board and the executive director. This came to light through the efforts of the widely known and respected black columnist and political writer, Carl Rowan, early in 1994 and shocked, angered and saddened the black community.

The removal of Executive Director Rev. Benjamin Chavis Jr. after less than one year in that post, followed Not satisfied, a rank-and-file membership rebellion, unprecedented in NAACP history, also demanded replacement of Chairman of the Board William Gib-

son. In his place Myrlie Evers-Williams, widow of NAACP activist Medgar Evers, who was murdered by white racist southerners during the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, was elected as chairman of the board in May this year.

Myrlie Evers-Williams has brought to the post a model of life and leadership in the post-civil rights era. As the former commissioner of the Board of Public Works for the city of Los Angeles, she administered an annual budget of nearly a billion dollars. Her administrative experience is vast and untarnished. Her commitment has never been questioned. For many, her support for the appointment of Kwesi Mfume confirms her determination to clean house and revamp an NAACP leadership that followed the acquittal in the Rodney King police brutality case, it was Kwesi Mfume, in his capacity as chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, who initiated and hosted a black leadership unity meeting to formulate strategy. Participants included Maxine Waters, member of Congress representing South Central Los Angeles, political stalwart and civil rights veteran Rev. Jesse Jackson, the controversial Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam and the newly appointed executive director of the NAACP, Rev. Chavis.

One of the first "accomplishments" of the Gingrich-led Republican congressional majority on assuming power was to drastically reduce congressional financial and operational support for the Congressional Black Caucus, the body that brings together all the black members of the Congress. At

the time, Kwesi Mfume was concluding his tenure as chairman of the caucus. During that tenure and on the House floor, Kwesi Mfume had revealed himself to be intelligent, very articulate, uncompromising on principle, politically savvy, untiring, consistent, unafraid, at once independent and as caucus chairman, a builder of consensus.

In a courageous demonstration of leadership in the face of a growing white backlash nationally to the random destruction, looting and death in Los Angeles and other cities that followed the acquittal in the Rodney King police brutality case, it was Kwesi Mfume, in his capacity as chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, who initiated and hosted a black leadership unity meeting to formulate strategy. Participants included Maxine Waters, member of Congress representing South Central Los Angeles, political stalwart and civil rights veteran Rev. Jesse Jackson, the controversial Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam and the newly appointed executive director of the NAACP, Rev. Chavis.

Blacks are hopeful that the new leadership of the NAACP will provide the kind of direction to the organisation that is needed in what many feel is a time of crisis for blacks in America. The leadership of the "Republican revolution" in Congress has already made clear its intentions regarding black America: end affirmative action, reverse redistricting to increase black and minority representation in government, implement severe cutbacks and restrictions in welfare, increase the cost of health care and care of the elderly and increase law enforcement powers and incarceration. It remains for the Democratic Party to provide a viable alternative that speaks to the needs of black Americans.

Since the days of Franklin D Roosevelt the NAACP has consistently placed its weight and its influence behind the Democratic Party and black voters have overwhelmingly followed suit. Under present conditions and with the new leadership of the organisation, together with the new mood of unity, commitment and responsibility demonstrated by the Million Man March, the coming period in black-white relations in America may prove to be transformative.

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Edited by Gamal Nkrumah

## Anti-terrorism bill revisited

By James Zogby

For the third time in as many years, the effort to pass an anti-terrorism bill has stalled in Congress. A broad coalition of legal, ethnic and religious organizations have come together to oppose this legislation. Their opposition is based on the fear that the proposed bill will violate a wide range of civil liberties guaranteed by the US Constitution, and will provide for the potentially abusive expansion of law enforcement.

The 1995 version of the anti-terrorism legislation was initially introduced by the Clinton administration as part of its efforts to counter what they described as domestic US support for foreign terrorist activities. The administration's bill included proposals to ban all US funds raising for groups defined by the president as "terrorist", deny visas to individuals identified with any such "terrorist" group, and allow for the use of secret evidence in extradition trials of individuals accused of membership in those organizations.

It was initially assumed that the administration's proposal would be accepted by the Republican-led Senate and Congress. Opponents of the bill, including Arab Americans, lobbied hard, receiving significant media attention for their complaint that the measures would violate constitutional protections. American-Jewish groups, on the other hand, lobbied equally hard in favour of the bill, arguing that it was necessary to stop terrorism, specifically Islamic and Arabic terrorism, from finding support in the US.

But the bill had lost momentum until the 19 April bombing in Oklahoma City added new urgency to the legislation and new cause for the administration and Congress to seek an expansion of law enforcement authority, even beyond the provisions in the original bill enhancing the power of law enforcement agencies to conduct wiretaps and investigations into the activities of "suspicious groups" and reducing the criteria needed to begin such an investigation.

Given the national trauma in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, it was assumed that the expanded bill would easily pass both houses of Congress. But it was at this time that the civil liberties lobby that traditionally influenced liberal members of Congress found new and unexpected allies among conservatives. Angered by the behaviour of federal law enforcement agencies in two recent incidents, conservatives were wary of taking steps to expand the role of the government into the private affairs of citizens.

Public hearings were called in Congress to examine the role of law enforcement agencies at both Ruby Ridge, Idaho, where federal officers, in what some saw as an unprovoked attack, killed the wife and son of a right-wing extremist; and the tragic events outside of Waco, Texas, where law enforcement agencies were once again criticised for the role they played in the deaths of scores of followers of the cult leader David Koresh.

As a result of this new concern among conservatives, the coalition opposing the anti-terrorism legislation grew. To the organisational muscle of the liberal civil liberties groups was added the apparatus of such powerful conservative organisations as the National Rifle Association, Gun Owners of America, and the Law Enforcement Alliance of America.

The Senate ultimately did pass the bill, but with some significant modifications. While some civil liberties groups were not satisfied with the Senate version, the revised bill did provide some additional protections not found in the original.

It was in the House of Representatives that the bill stalled. A group of 50 conservative Republicans balked at the legislation and refused to support either the administration's or the Senate's revised version. Even when a compromise was proposed, which would have deleted the enhanced wiretap provisions, deleted funding for additional FBI personnel, deleted the provision to allow military involvement in civilian law enforcement and deleted the overly broad definition of terrorism, the conservative alliance still refused to support it. Thus, a coalition of liberals and conservatives in Congress ended the possibility of passing an anti-terrorism bill in 1995.

The Republican leadership in Congress and the Democratic administration are both pledging to renew their efforts to secure the passage of an anti-terrorism bill in 1996. Both sides fear that the failure to pass such a bill will be used as a campaign issue.

But while "anti-terrorism" remains an emotional issue, it has not dissuaded both liberals and conservatives participating in the coalition from insisting that any legislation be precise, and not allow law enforcement agencies to overstep their bounds.

During a recent press conference sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union (the group that has led the effort against the anti-terrorism legislation), I made clear our community's continuing opposition to the legislation.

I based my case on a number of issues. First, the legislation is not necessary. In fact, to listen to the national outcry about terrorism in the US, one might conclude that the problem was of epidemic proportion. The FBI's own statistics prove the contrary to be true. During the 1970s, there were dozens of domestic acts of terrorism committed each year. Even in the early 1980s, when the FBI began to officially publish annual reports on domestic terrorism, the number of incidents averaged roughly 20 per year. In the past few years the number has been reduced to an average of three or four.

It is also significant to note that the major source of such domestic terrorism is not from Arab or Muslim groups, as has been widely projected in the media. In fact, by the FBI's own count, since 1982, there have been approximately 175 incidents of domestic terrorism overall. Of that number, 77 have been committed by Puerto Rican nationalistic groups, 23 by left wing groups, and 12 by anti-Castro Cuban organisations. Eighteen acts were committed by what the FBI termed "Jewish extremists" and 31 by animal rights and environmental groups. By contrast, in the past 14 years there have been only three domestic terrorism incidents attributed to Arabs or Muslims.

Even a look at the State Department reports on anti-US terrorist acts committed abroad shows that those originating in the Middle East by Arab or Islamic people are among the fewest. For example, in 1994, 44 anti-US terrorist acts occurred in Latin America, compared to 8 in the Middle East; in 1993 the numbers were 68 in Latin America and 8 in the Middle East.

Terrorism is an evil and it must be stopped. But it appears that US law enforcement agencies already have the power to do the job and they are succeeding. In fact, the testimony of law enforcement experts was unanimous in stating that, as horrific as the Oklahoma City and World Trade Centre bombings were, there is nothing in even the most extreme versions of the proposed legislation that would have stopped either of these two hideous acts before they occurred.

In the case of the group around Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, one must remember that the FBI did, in fact, have that group under surveillance and even had informants operating in its midst. The informant was the government's star witness in the case against Abdel-Rahman, but neither he nor the FBI was able to stop the crime before it occurred.

The World Trade Centre Case notwithstanding, to make Arabs and Muslims the targets of this legislation, as some American-Jewish groups and members of Congress have done, is plainly wrong and not justified by the facts.

Our concern, therefore, is that existing standards should not be expanded to allow more intrusive activity by law enforcement. The coalition that formed to oppose the anti-terrorism legislation remains committed to fighting efforts to further erode rights that are guaranteed in the constitution to everyone residing in the US.

For three years we have succeeded in saving off such efforts, but our resolve will be tested once more in 1996.

The writer is president of the Washington-based Arab American Institute.



Fighting between rival militias of the United Liberation Movement (ULIMO) erupted this week around Tubmanburg, 60 km away from the Liberian capital Monrovia. The UN estimates more than 150,000 Liberians have been killed in the civil war. The Liberian civil war is one of 20 conflicts around the world where the UN is involved in peacemaking efforts (photo: AP)

## Up against heavy odds

Gamal Nkrumah listened to UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali at a seminar organised by the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies on what gives definition to the world body under his leadership

A young-looking septuagenarian, the United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Ghali looked indefatigable, steering round-table discussions next to an equally purposeful Abdel-Moeine Said, director of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies. Ghali was understandably protective of the world body. "The UN has no separate entity or will apart from those of the 183 member states that make up the world body. There is no new world order yet. It is up to member states to collectively agree on launching a new world order," he said.

In their 1996 report, Human Rights Watch described Boutros Ghali as the "humble servant of 183 masters who cannot mask [his] abdication of leadership in the human rights realm". He brushes aside such criticism. "We need to view this in the context of steady effort," the secretary-general said. Is it not conviction and courage, rather than severity and indecision, that have carried him beyond the constraints of most mortals' expectations? At the seminar, he glimpsed something of the steely resolve that has carried him to the top.

He made no bones about the fact that the UN suffers a crisis of credibility. Long-time detractors of the UN secretary-general looked on with undisguised glee as the UN failed miserably to usher in peace in the Balkans, virtually vacating the area to beat a hasty retreat and allow the American-led North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to dictate the terms of peace.

The role of the secretary-general is to implement the decisions of the Security Council," the secretary-general said.

The mid-1990s are a time to look forward to change. Boutros Ghali looked as likely a candidate as any to break the impasse over how to go about changing the world for the better. Ghali is unyielding in his insistence that there is increased interest in social problems among UN member states.

In spite of bureaucratic and financial constraints, the UN is coordinating a comprehensive strategy for social and environmental development. The UN secretary-general made reference to the Rio de Janeiro, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing conferences and the forthcoming Habitat II Conference in Istanbul.

"The democratisation of international relations is not on offer. Five decades ago, when the UN was founded, decolonisation was not on the cards. Today we have narco-terrorism, religious terrorism, the mafia, and the state is threatened from within," he said. "I believe, above all, that the UN must be a think-tank to try to prepare solutions for the problems of tomorrow. Because

of globalisation, we will be confronted by new problems. Who was aware of the environment 20 years ago? Who was aware of transnational crime?" he queried the participants.

The Vienna-based UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch are engaged in a number of projects worldwide ranging from the prevention and control of money laundering to fighting organised crime and improving the operational instruments for combating international crime as well as resolving drug-related social problems. The UN also provides technical assistance to member states upon request in order to promote criminal and legislative reform.

The UN International Drug Control Programme works closely with the Centre for Human Rights. Big powers have increasingly used the human rights issue to withhold aid. Human rights have become a most contentious issue in international relations, Ghali noted. In what sounded like a well-rehearsed and thoughtful lecture, Ghali urged the Third World to stay the course with democracy — egged on by economic liberalisation. One detected something of the determination to reform and restructure not just the UN, but the world which has assured its own place in history.

There are currently 70,000 UN peacekeepers in the field. "Every conflict has its own peculiarities," the secretary-general said. "We can never learn from past conflicts, because every conflict is unique," he emphasised.

The most important aspect of conflict resolution is the warring parties' political will to stop the conflict," he said. "Without the political will to resolve a conflict, all our peacekeeping efforts are in vain," he stressed. "In Angola, there was the political will to resolve Africa's longest running civil war. Opposition leader [Jonas] Savimbi and President [Eduardo] Dos Santos of Angola wanted to end the conflict," he said. "In Somalia, 11 different 'governments' exist side by side. And, in Cambodia there were two rival governments, yet when there was a political will there was a way to resolve the conflict there," Ghali pointed out.

Ghali called for a reassessment of certain big powers' non-committal policy towards the UN. He had America, Germany and Japan in mind. Ghali was working to pull the world together be-

hind a powerful UN, he assured his listeners.

The UN tops the peacekeeping debts list and owes \$1.4 billion to the UN — more than 40 per cent of the total bill for outstanding contributions. There is a crisis of confidence concerning the UN. The world body has incurred \$3,330 million in debts. "We still have not been able to solve our financial crisis. The member states owe us around \$2.6 billion. They owe in addition approximately \$1 billion for the UN operations in the former Yugoslavia," Ghali said.

"This Compensation Commission has no money. In the case that Resolution 986 (1995) is implemented, 30 per cent of the revenue from the oil will be given to this Commission, and we will be able to offer compensation to the thousands of workers all over the Third World," he stressed.

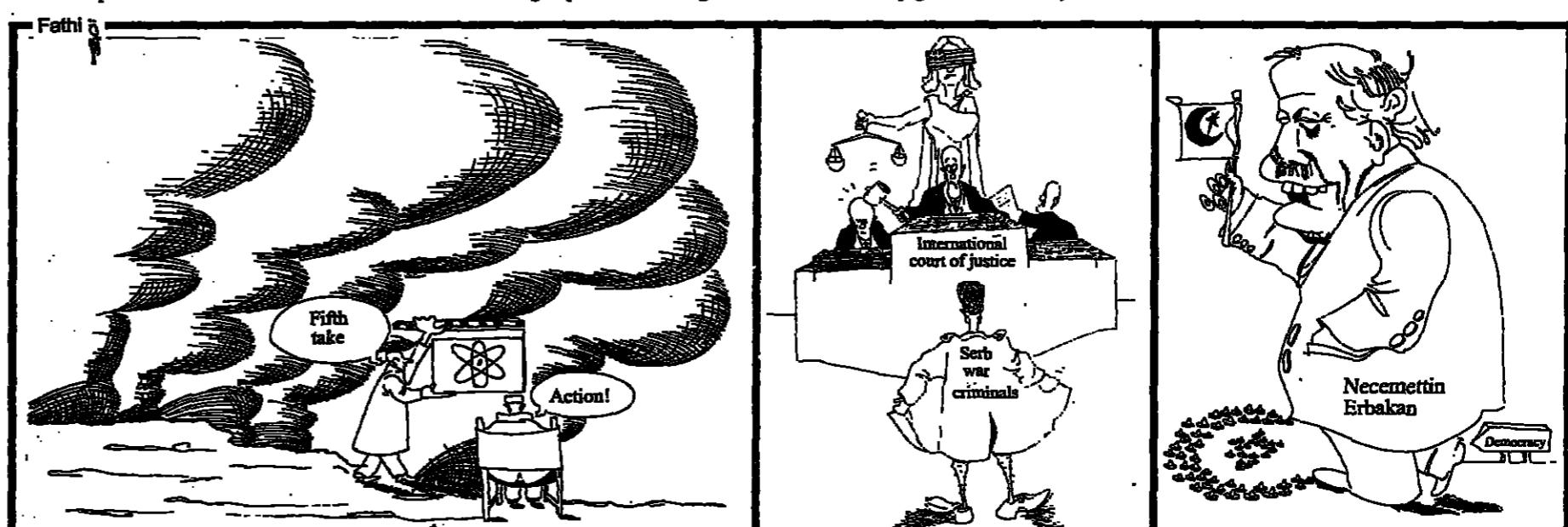
"So it is not altruistic. Certainly my number one priority is that the people of Iraq are suffering. But there is a second very important element: we need money to be able to pay compensation to the millions of workers who have lost their jobs and who lost many things during the Iraq-Kuwait war," he explained.

"America no longer controls the dollar — the world market does. The authority of the nation-state will diminish in the next few years," Ghali predicted. But, we live in a world where the authoritarian pulse of America still beats in the arena of international relations, he intimated.

According to Boutros Ghali, the UN is not ignoring the Third World's entreaties for attention. "African leaders feel marginalised: the perception is a very negative one: that nobody is paying attention to Africa anymore," he explained. His recent tour of West Africa was partly to dispel this negative perception, he said.

Small wonder the UN Department of Information has embarked on using radio and television as cost-effective media tools of its global outreach activities. "Currently, 29 programmes in 15 languages are being sent to broadcasters worldwide," he said. The secretary-general's Blue Books Series on peacekeeping, peace-making and development issues are a new activity of the department that has left the indelible mark of Boutros Ghali on the UN.

"The World Bank now looks into my suggestions of the different country categorisations," Ghali mused. "I impressed upon World Bank officials that the world is not divided just into developed and developing countries, but war-torn countries are a special classification unto themselves," he added. "I still have 12, or let us say 11, months," he said. "To be a civil servant is to be trained that nobody will say, 'Thank you'. We are doing our job," he said. It is better to be blinded by Blue Helmets than hoodwinked by



## French labour pains

It appears that there has been a revival of social struggles in France. What is involved exactly?

Aguton: There has, indeed, been a revival of struggles. They have now been going on for more than a year, since the first strikes took place before the election of President Jacques Chirac.

These struggles have several origins: a wish to recover the purchasing power eroded by the crisis of these last few years (the strike at the Alstom industrial equipment company which manufactured cars for Cairo Metro); a wish to protect public services threatened by the European Union's liberalisation drive (France Telecom, the railways and electricity all face privatisation efforts); and a wish to protect social welfare in general including pensions, health and unemployment insurance.

In all these cases there is resistance to the policies that Paris, as well as Brussels, have adopted to deal with the crisis.

Is there united action among the different labour federations?

Harris: For several years, there was no united action. But the announcement

made by the Juppé government to freeze the salaries of civil servants served as a catalyst for a general union strike on 10 October 1995.

The numbers of strikers even surpassed, in certain sectors, those seen in the student-worker strikes of 1968.

Unfortunately, the larger union confederations were again divided on the follow-up to 10 October. Some wanted to negotiate wage increases in return for concessions made by workers in changes to working hours. Others hoped to obtain these increases without yielding anything in return.

Is there a link between the movement for the marginalised and the workers' movement?

Aguton: One of the most important events of these last few years has been the appearance of the movement for the marginalised. Associations for the unemployed have been strengthened, especially concerning the burning question of housing. There are several hundred thousand people in France who no longer have a home or are on the way to losing

their associations, the *Droits au logement* (Right to Housing) and the *Comité des sans-logis* (Homeless Committee), have been created and become renowned for requisitioning empty apartment blocks.

Relations with the workers movement did not come about spontaneously. The crisis has lasted 20 years, unemployment has become a permanent feature and the new jobs created are precarious ones — short-term contracts or part-time work. The unions primarily organise workers with secure status who work in large companies. These peoples' preoccupations are not identical to those of the long-term unemployed or of people in transit from one "minor job" to another.

A movement was created to bring together the struggles of the unemployed and those of the workers. "Act together against unemployment" groups together the trade unions and the associations for the unemployed and the marginalised to fight against unemployment. The movement battles, in particular, for the reduction of working hours.

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## Autonomy and anathema

A potential pitfall in any series of negotiations, such as those between the PNA and Israel that have led to the establishment of the self-rule areas, is that one side may misunderstand the other's tacit, or not so tacit, intentions. For example, in seeking to put into effect the autonomy granted the Palestinians following the Oslo II talks, Arafat may have deemed it his responsibility to ensure the security of those residing in the self-rule areas. He may even have gone so far as to listen carefully when Israel made its continued withdrawal from the Occupied Territories conditional on how well he shouldered this security burden.

Therefore, it probably came as an unwelcome surprise to the Palestinian leader when Hamas activist Yehya Ayyash was killed by an exploding mobile phone last Friday. The assassination of Ayyash, also known as "the Engineer", understandably prompted a wave of protest from Hamas supporters and other Palestinians. The aftershocks of the killing, however, have gone beyond the chanting of slogans and screams of bloody murder. For Arafat, the repercussions will be dire, especially at a time when he is struggling to maintain a tenuous balance between rejectionist Palestinians and those who favour peace. Hamas leaders, who are opposed to, and are boycotting the elections, have blamed Arafat for failing to stay Israel's hand.

While Israeli officials have so far refused to accept responsibility for the assassination, Israeli newspapers have confirmed that Shimon Peres had his hand on the trigger that Peres ordered to be pulled. Official denials aside, the damage is done. The five-month long stay in hostilities initiated by Hamas from the self-rule areas is sure now to come to an end. This will be a major setback for Arafat as he tries to guide the Palestinians through their first democratic elections. And for peace between Israel and Syria, it could pose a major stumbling block.

Showcasing little regret for the slaying of "the Engineer", Israel's Police Minister Moshe Shahal, quoted a passage from the Bible: "He who lives by the sword, dies by the sword." True perhaps, but by killing Ayyash how many other deaths have been engineered?

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**Al-Ahram Weekly**



# The morphology of pan-Arabism

**Mohamed Sid-Ahmed** discusses whether pan-Arabism can survive without serious reconsideration of the foundations on which it is built

Althusser, the most famous French Marxist philosopher in the sixties, was the first to come forward with what, to my mind, was the breakthrough discovery that Marx had been not one, but multiple. There was the young Marx imbued with Hegelianism, then the mature Marx of *Das Kapital*, finally the elderly Marx. But most people who have embraced Marxist ideology tend to perceive him as an indivisible whole and disregard his evolution as a thinker.

Over the years, many schools of thought have attributed themselves to Marxism, then to Marxism-Leninism. When ideological conflicts erupted between them, each would invoke quotations from Marx to rebut the arguments of other Marxist schools. But such a procedure was based on the assumption that Marx's thinking always remained consistent towards itself and never changed, which, of course, was not true. And this is where Althusser's discovery proved to be so pertinent.

Actually, Althusser's approach did not apply to Marxism only, but to all ideological edifices that are used to justify a given line of political activism. What applies to Marxism applies just as much to the ideology of pan-Arabism. Indeed, various pan-Arabist schools, particularly the Baathists, have done much to idealise pan-Arabism and to endow it with inviolability over space and time: "From the Ocean to the Gulf"; "From the beginning (azal) to the end (abad) of time." But pan-Arabism like all

other frames of thinking, has had its ups and downs, and Arabs cannot proceed from the premise that it should always be marked by invariance, whatever the circumstances.

The pan-Arab idea is predicated on the notion that there exists an Arab Nation with specificities of its own, and that the Arabs' allegiance to that Nation transcends whatever other allegiances they may have, whether to smaller entities, such as loyalty to a given Arab state, or to a larger entity, such as an Islamic Nation. Pan-Arabism does not distinguish between Arabs on the basis of religion, ethnicity, nationality or otherwise.

The idea of the Arab Nation was derived by the founders of pan-Arab ideology from the idea of the nation-state in Europe. They introduced it to fill the vacuum created by the breakdown of the Ottoman Caliphate in Istanbul, and to protect minorities in the Arab world from new forms of discrimination. It was no accident that pan-Arab ideology first emerged in the Levant, a mountainous region where many Arab minorities sought refuge over the centuries.

The concept went through many stages. First came the theoretical stage, in which the new idea was preached as a substitute for a post-Capitulation Islamic Nation at a time Ar-

turks' takeover of power in Turkey in the aftermath of World War I had deprived it of a centre of gravity. The advocates of an Arab Nation took Garibaldi's unification of the Italian nation and Bismarck's of the German as models to be followed.

Then came the second stage of practical implementation in the wake of World War II, when two events, namely, the creation of the state of Israel and the anti-colonial struggle, gave pan-Arab solidarity new impetus, first, to stand up to the fragmentation of Arab land by a variety of colonial powers (Great Britain, France, Italy) and, second, to the usurpation of Arab Palestine by the Zionists. The latter issue addressed the very existence of a pan-Arab entity, not the determination of its boundaries.

This second stage came to a sudden halt with the '67 defeat and the passing of Security Council resolution 242, which called for the elimination of the consequences of the aggression — not for the elimination of the state of Israel — and the exchange of (the) territories occupied in 1967 for peace with Israel. Thus began a third stage, where pan-Arabism could no longer cling to its previous uncompromising and absolute character if it hoped to cope with a whole new

product of an economic infrastructure, a common market, as is the case of the European nations, but, rather, of a common language which, because of a sacred text like the Qur'an, has survived over the centuries to produce the essence of what is known as Arab civilisation. It is no accident that Israel has resorted to the idea of a Middle East market as its main tool to undermine pan-Arabism, because it knows that the economic dimension is its most vulnerable point. This year, on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Herzl's book, *The Jewish State*, Israel plans to discuss means of updating Zionism in line with the new conditions of peace in the region. This confronts the Arabs with the need to update pan-Arabism as a condition for its survival.

In this connection, it is interesting to question whether any specific meaning should be given to the fact that Egypt's new prime minister, who served as minister for planning for over a decade, is now called upon to remove the obstacles impeding privatisation, the very antithesis of planning. It is also interesting to note that the notion of planning is closely linked to Nasser's (pan-)Arab approach to politics. Is this no more than a coincidence at a time the government is in search of an ideology that is neither unbridled liberalism serving Israel's 'Middle East market' approach, nor Islamic fundamentalism that is adopted by a variety of terrorist groups throughout the region?

## Two challenges, one reply

By Naguib Mahfouz



The resignation of the prime minister and the subsequent cabinet changes highlight two of the most important matters we face as the century draws to a close. How is Egypt going to cope with the coming century, and how will it secure improvements in the quality of life for those on low incomes?

Advances already made in information technology will pale in comparison to those that will come in the next century. The computer will be all powerful, and we will all be enmeshed in the internet, with unrestricted access to all the information we desire, or for that matter, do not desire. Without taking on board the far-reaching implications of the information revolution, it will be impossible to guarantee our future, even in the short term.

And what of the poorest members of our society? How are we to improve their lot? There are, of course, no easy answers, though it would seem to me that answers must be found since it is only by alleviating poverty and distress that we can hope to establish what I would term continual peace.

Now these two pressing issues — how to cope with technological advances, particularly in the field of information, and how to help the least advantaged members of our society — are in fact interrelated. They both demand that we make strenuous efforts to improve the quality and content of the education that is offered our young people. It is not too simplistic to state that unemployment is a major impetus to terrorism — make people employable, gainfully, and you are well on your way to eradicating terrorism. Underline that advance by staging an intensive, anti-corruption campaign and the winning post is in sight.

Based on an interview with Mohamed Salaway.

The writer is director of the Centre for Asian Studies at Cairo University.

By Hassan Fouad

## The Press This Week

By Hassan Fouad

## No policy change

with the president to get the go-ahead for the new cabinet. In this dramatic fashion the cabinet change was brought about.

On Monday May 6, the mouthpiece of the ruling National Democratic Party, published exclusive statements by President Hosni Mubarak on the launching of his new book, *Secret Channels: Arab-Israel Negotiations*. In the interview, Mubarak said: "The cabinet reshuffle which took place was given due consideration and was the subject of serious study. I started to think about it last summer

would this come about? Through a coup d'état? Of course not. It must be through democratic means. But even then, I do not see viable alternatives. The political parties in Egypt are remnants of the past. None have had practical experience in the exercise of power."

"The NDP is the remnant of the Arab Socialist Union and the National Union. It includes those who wish to be close to the centres of power. The Wafd Party is a faded image of the days of Mustafa El-Nahas and Saad Zaghloul. The Labour Party is a dimmive Mass El-Fatah and the Muslim Brotherhood is a replica in miniature of what it once was."

"Moreover, I have complete confidence in President Mubarak and I fully support him. I do not want Egypt to enter into a series of misadventures. The crucial issue is not new alternatives, but a need for the country to regain its will."

*'The new cabinet is not quite new. It reflects a desire for change and one for continuity, for introducing new elements while retaining old ones who experienced economic reform from its inception. This leads us to think that there is no change in the new government's objectives.'*

Salama Ahmed Salama

bringing about achievements. The objectives are the same but the pace has become quicker. In short, this is a government of achievements, one which does not postpone solutions." On its front cover, October published a photograph of the new prime minister.

In *Al-Akhbar*, Mustafa Amin wrote in his daily back-page column: "The new prime minister has inherited a legacy weighted down with debts. Repaying these debts is no easy matter — it is impossible to put matters right in five minutes. He needs patience and so do the people. His first task is to bring about peace between govern-

wrote in his page one column in *Al-Akhbar El-Yom* under the title "Question marks": "How can we penalise the candidate who secured his seat with blood and has now become a respectable deputy? And will the respectable deputy allow his accomplices to be penalised? And if the investigating authorities request the lifting of his immunity, will the request not be granted as usual? Can the respectable deputy abandon his functions? Are not thuggery, violence and murder enough to cast doubt on the conduct of the elections?"

And should we not respect the rulings of the Appeals Court looking into election malpractices?

We know that we need cooperation between all factions. Egypt needs all the Egyptians not just some of them. It needs a ceasefire and not underground activity. We need everything out in the open and the people should feel they are part of the process and have the right to know everything. It is required of every Egyptian that he should take part in the building process and not relegated to throwing stones or firing guns.

We do not need swords to cut off heads, but we need writers and thinkers and working bands."

In the same issue of *Al-Akhbar*, the satiric writer Ahmed Ragab said in his daily column: "I spent a long time thinking what has changed. The cabinet was that of Ahmed, now it has become Haj Ahmed." On Saturday Ahmed Ragab, warning to the subject,

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**Close up**

Salama A. Salama

**Living with Mossad**

Clearly peace, as the Israelis understand it, constitutes a continuation of conflict in different forms. It does not seem to imply the establishment of co-operation and neighbourly relations. Normalisation, it would appear, does not preclude spying, the elimination of the opposition, placing explosives or drug-running. These, it seems, are all elements of the co-existence that the Arabs are expected to enter into.

Two events occurred last week which reinforce this conclusion. First the assassination of Yehia Ayyash, the Hamas leader suspected by Israel as being the mastermind behind many of the suicide operations carried out during the last few years. When a mobile phone exploded, killing Ayyash, Israel was the first to announce the news and to congratulate itself, just as it had when Padi Shapqai was assassinated in Malta several months ago. The Israeli intelligence services were responsible for both actions.

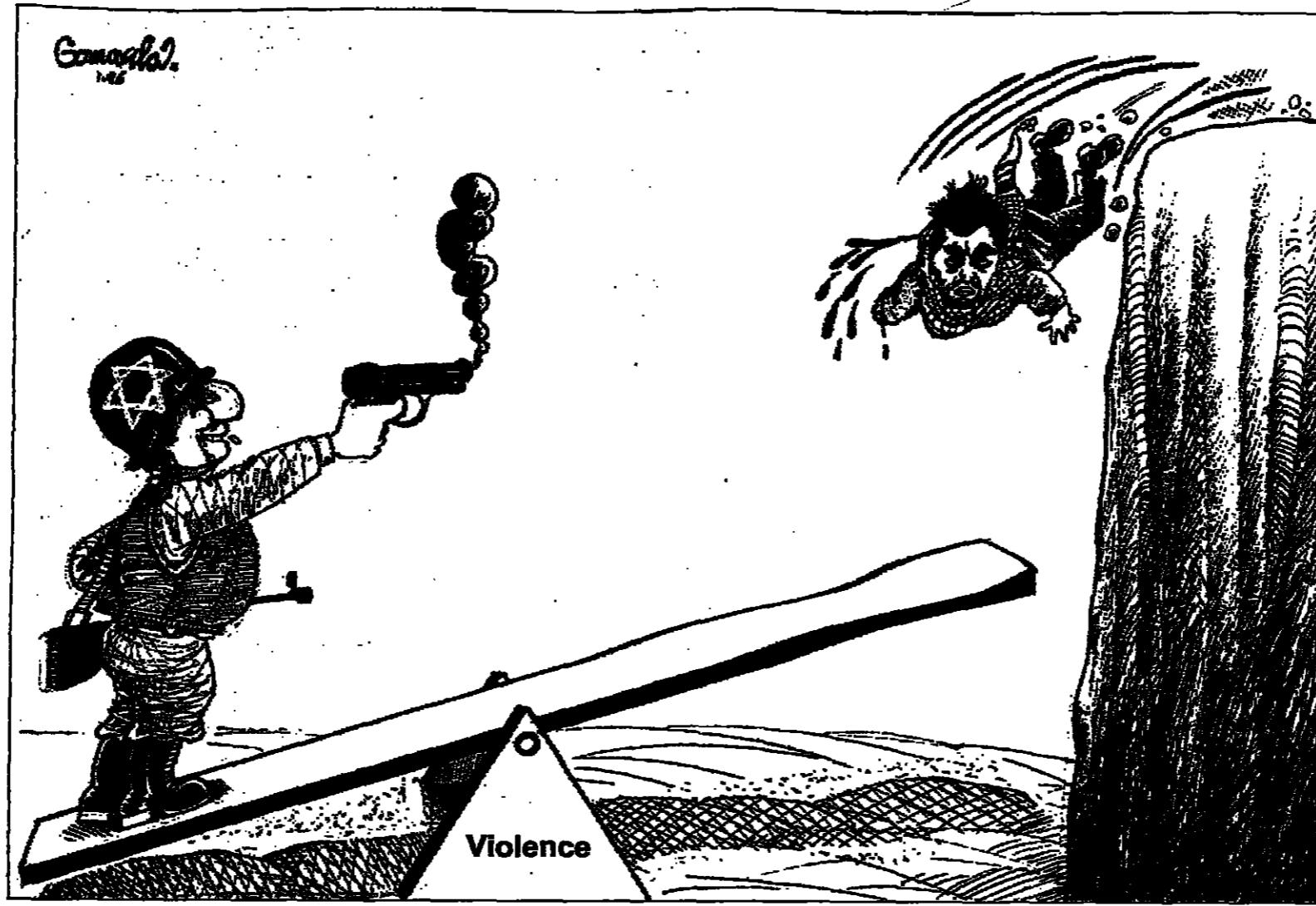
The timing of Ayyash's assassination was not perhaps, nor was it merely an act of vendetta, an attempt to get rid of a Palestinian responsible for a series of suicidal operations that claimed many Israeli lives. It occurred, after all, at a critical phase in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, just as general elections are about to legitimise Arafat and the Palestinian National Authority, and after Arafat had himself been trying to come to an understanding with the opponents of the Palestinian-Israeli agreement, led by Hamas, that would end internecine squabbles.

Israel, seeking to sabotage this phase of the agreement and thus delay final negotiations, and seeking too to place the blame for any delay on the shoulders of the Palestinians, took the opportunity to murder Ayyash and thereby reignited the conflict between Arafat and his opposition.

Israel has thus managed to poison the atmosphere in a manner designed to encourage increasing divisiveness between Palestinians. Israel's actions also allow Shimon Peres to prove to the Israeli opposition, and to extremists in Israel, that the long arm of the military is still capable of destroying its enemies, wherever they may be.

Israel seeks to impose the peace that will suit it. This conclusion is lent further weight by an event that took place in Egypt. During interrogation, an Israeli agent suspected of spying on military secrets for Mossad and of peddling heroin turned out to be one of the "Palestinian collaborators" whom Israel has confined its protection. This revelation, widely reported in the Egyptian press, lies behind recent protests by the new Israeli foreign minister against the Egyptian media.

It is only natural for Israel to protest against criticism in the Egyptian press. The connection between Israeli terrorism and Israeli claims to desire peace seem less natural. And one consequence of such unnatural linkage is the urgent necessity of Arab security systems to review Israeli activities, and the activities of their Palestinian collaborators, at a time when Israel's professed desire for peace seem increasingly spurious.

**An ambiguous harvest of terror**

Last year's final months saw a series of disparate terrorist attacks. What holds these events together is the fatal dialectic between state and terror that they reveal, argues **Eqbal Ahmad**

October and November, 1995 were memorable months in one respect: there was terror or the threat of terror all around us. For the purposes of our discussion, which concerns the dialectic between the state and terrorism, we will recall here the cases of Aimal Kansi, three events in Pakistan, and Yitzhak Rabin's assassination.

The United States government has been advertising handsome rewards for information leading to the capture of Mir Aimal Kansi. The Pakistani is the prime suspect in the murder, on 25 January, 1993, of two CIA employees outside the agency's headquarters in Langley, Virginia. He is also accused of wounding three others. Mystery surrounds Kansi's case. His victims were Lansing C. Bennett, who was described in a *Washington Post* story as a "physician and intelligence analyst for the CIA", and Frank During, who was "assigned to tasks involving covert operations". Two of the injured were also identified as CIA agents.

Kansi obviously knew his men. He approached their cars at the stop light on Dolly Madison Boulevard, barely 500 yards from the gate of the CIA's 258-acre headquarters in Langley, shot them at close range, inches from the windows of their cars, spared a woman passenger, and sped away. The next day he was reported to have fled to Pakistan from the National Airport, a Washington D.C. fish bowl. His Pakistani passport had expired in March 1992, and, according to Pakistani officials, had not been renewed. So what did he travel on?

Aimal Kansi's life in the US also had its mysterious aspects. On arrival in March 1991 — on a business visit — he was spared the usual procedure for aliens entering the country. No one would say why. He requested political asylum — in 1991 — and was granted a renewable one-year work permit, which he did not renew. He was employed in an outfit, Excel Courier Inc., on a salary of \$700 a week, an unusual windfall for one with limited qualifications and scant

record of employment in the U.S. The company is owned by Chris Marchetti, a former CIA official who had once been an aide to its director, Richard Helms. The Kansi family lives in Quetta, a city from which the CIA had engaged in covert operations, and had left behind a lot of dislodged clients.

Our second case concerns Pakistan, which has played host during October-November to a number of terrorist events — two lucky escapes and one great atrocity. A group of army officers were arrested for planning a coup that would wipe out the top echelon of the army, execute the president and prime minister, and impose upon the country an Islamic caliphate of inverted imagination. The officers claimed to be patriots who intended merely to aid the struggle in Kashmir. Without waiting for justice to take its course, Pakistan's premier Islamic party expressed its solidarity with them. And as if this were not chilling enough, a group of sectarian terrorists entered human-rights lawyer Asma Jahangir's house with the intent, and equipment, to commit murder.

On 19 November, the earth trembled in Islamabad, trees shook, houses rattled, and people died in a terrorist attack. Three Islamic parties in Egypt took credit for this foul and heartless crime. The communiqué from the International Justice Group was notable for its graphic sadism: "The plateau of martyrs Khaled Islambouli executed an operation today which sent skulls, limbs and corpses flying, and leaving dozens dead and wounded at Rabin's diplomatic mission in Islamabad."

A number of powers in various parts of the world have yet to come to terms with the fact that the dead and wounded of 19 November were victims, not only of the extremists who

call themselves Islamic, but also of the opulence, deception, and crimes of government. This is a long though uncomplicated subject because the states which I mention here have spawned sectarian terror in multiple if crude ways. There is here neither space nor time to elaborate this point fully but what follows can be considered a few pointers.

With Mohammed Zia ul-Haq's and his cohorts' collaboration, the United States has helped to revitalise and internationalise the notion of armed jihad in a manner and in sense that the Muslim world has not experienced in recent centuries. To add insult to injury, Washington has not only used armed Islamism as an instrument of its policy, but has also abandoned and denounced it after its purposes have been served. The current anti-Americanism of the Islamic movement is causal; it is by no means pathological.

In Pakistan the governments — of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) no less than the Islamic League (PML) — which came after Zia ul-Haq have continued to view opportunistically even the most sectarian and violent of Islamic parties. Thus both parties have variously coalesced with the Jamaat-i-Islami, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam, and the Anjuman-i-Sipahi-Sabah; both have failed to amend the worst features of the blasphemy laws; both have shied away from repealing the Hudood Ordinances.

Moving on to my last case study. On 4 November, 1995, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel was assassinated at a peace rally in Tel Aviv. Governments and the world media then praised Rabin as a peace maker who had paid the 'price of peace'. The assassin belonged to Eyal, a militant Zionist organisation committed

to the colonisation of territories captured by Israel in the 1967 war. The establishment of these settlements has been Israel's bipartisan policy since 1969, in which all Israeli governments, including those in which Rabin held high positions, actively promoted the settler movement, established and financed no less than 300 settlements in the Occupied Territories, forcibly expropriated large amounts of Arab land, diverted and deprived native people of their water resources, and let loose armed Jewish zealots among a disarmed Muslim and Christian population — all in clear and flagrant violation of international law and agreements. This sordid record notwithstanding, Yitzhak Rabin and his government could still reasonably be described as 'peace makers' had the Oslo Agreements held for the dispossessed Palestinians some promise of restitution.

The 'peace process', however, does little to ameliorate these cruel injustices, and nothing whatsoever to roll back the illegal, officially subsidised and officially protected enclaves of extremism in the Occupied Territories. The Zionist right does dislike the 'peace process', but only because it appears to limit the orbit of its sectarian ambitions and its hopes of expelling the remainder of Palestinians from their homes. Yitzhak Rabin paid the price not so much of peace making but of letting loose a monster he and his party are even now reluctant to disown, either politically or ideologically. The symbiosis of terror, ideology and statehood is so deeply rooted in Zionist tradition that it will take decades to uproot it, even with a different model of peace making than that proposed by Oslo I & II. After all, among the saplings which have sprouted from these roots was the Likud, which has grown into one of Israel's two major parties.

Extremism is now an integral part of Israeli state and society. Note the assassin's relations with the Israeli defence and intelligence services. Yigal Amir is not a fringe figure. He is, as columnist Zeev Schif put it, the "boy next door", a member of the elite Golani brigade in the Israeli Defence Force, an undercover agent of Shin Bet, an activist in the settler movement, and a law student at Bar Ilan University. The bullet which killed the Israeli prime minister came from the arsenal of the Israeli army. Naturally, conspiracy theories abound among Israelis, and most implicate their own secret services in the murder. Michael Harsagar, a respected historian at Tel Aviv University, concludes bluntly that "the attack could not have succeeded without the conspiracy of the security services." And Rabin's assassin has told the court ominously that the Truth will turn Israel upside down".

For thoughtful Israelis this ought to serve as a painful moment of truth. For decades their state has engaged in organised terror over another people. To advance their agenda of colonising Palestine even Israel's 'liberal' politicians — Ben Gurion, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres — opportunistically fostered movements and ideas which were extremist in their beliefs, violent in their outlook, and deeply contemptuous of life and civilisation. And to consolidate their conquests and colonisation they are engaged, even today, in creating a apartheid peace on the occupied West Bank and in Jerusalem. Such an inverted agenda for peace can bring lasting peace neither between Jews and Arabs in Palestine nor in the heart of Israel itself.

The larger conclusion to be drawn is general, and is not confined to Israel alone. Sectarian movements rarely possess the virtues of patience, discipline of discourse, culture of analysis, or sense of security in a broad and complex environment. Hence, on the mildest scent of threat, or the slightest suspicion of betrayal, they turn on friends and enemies alike, inwardly no less than outwardly.

**A perfect panacea for all ills?**

The new cabinet faces the onerous challenge of striking a necessary balance between economic reform and social development, writes **Fathi Abdel-Fattah**

free-market policies are still novelties.

In all these projects, however, the missing consideration seems, uniformly, to have been the social dimension of development.

If we look to the United States, for example, we can see the development of the most significant battle in years over the economic direction the country should take. The clash is taking place between the Republican Party, which currently enjoys a majority in Congress, and the democratic president, Bill Clinton. The Republicans want to balance the federal budget by the year 2002, as part of what the party hawks call their "Contract with America". Clinton, on the other hand, opposes this general project, and has vetoed eight bills presented for his signature under its umbrella, describing it as a "contract for America's destruction," since it ignores the interests of middle and low income groups in American society.

Similarly, France, public attention has recently been preoccupied by the prospect of wide-ranging strikes in protest against the government's plan to cut that part of the budget allotted to health and social services.

Even in countries already part of the free-market economy, such as the United States and France, economic reform projects that ignore social and human consequences are confronting major obstacles. What is currently hap-

pening in Russia, and in a number of Eastern European countries, must add to the already considerable sense of unease with which these policies must be greeted. We should be highly suspicious of economics that are based solely on market forces, free competition and the encouragement of private enterprise.

The results of the recent elections in Russia and Poland attest to this. These results, and the situation in these two countries, have proved that economic reform that involves a shift from a socialist, planned economy, to a kind of basic capitalism, may be very difficult to effect — certainly far more so than the opposite conversion from capitalism to socialism.

In Egypt, as in a great number of developing countries, it is natural that problems should arise in implementing economic reforms that involve the shift from centralised planning and the state ownership of production, to capitalist "open-door" type policies based on market forces and private entrepreneurship. This is all the more likely to be the case when we add unemployment, low development rates, and accumulating debt, which are global problems exacerbated by additional factors largely outside of state control, such as increasing economic globalisation, and the growing power of multi-national companies. The increasing pace of scientific and technological change has also changed many

of the rules of the game, even where the apologists of capitalism are concerned.

Because of these challenges, a necessary balance should be struck in order to ensure that development is genuinely social development concerned with the individual. Economic progress and true development cannot be realised in the shadow of widespread unemployment and the social and health problems that result from the kind of poverty that obstructs the potential of the individual, who should be the real creator, as well as the true beneficiary of development.

Reformist economic projects are now facing a turning-point, whether in the advanced capitalist countries, or in those making the transition from a planned to a non-planned economy. They face a turning point too in the Third World, whose countries have been turned into a kind of field for economic experimentation. What is at least clear is that, world-wide, substantial attempts are currently being made to reach new agendas for economic progress distinct from the pervasive traditional concepts of socialism and of capitalism.

As it stands, we have confused the issue, and are caught between the free market and free competition on the one hand, and the need to guarantee basic provisions for the workforce on the other. I believe that it is this dilemma that will most challenge Dr El-Gamouri and his new cabinet.

The writer is the director of Al-Gomhouria's newspaper centre for strategic studies.

**To The Editor****Babylon ailing**

Sir: The Iraqi people's disaster, resulting from the stringent UN sanctions imposed on their country, has transcended all acceptable limits. Meanwhile the Arab League seems unable to take a decisive and crucial stance with regards to the suffering of the Iraqi people.

President Saddam Hussein's greed could abolish Iraqi youth's dreams for a better standard of living. The Iraqi people have paid a very dear price for a mistake made by their ruler. Hospitals and clinics are void of even the most basic first aid. There is no medicine or anaesthetic available for surgical operations. Imagine the extent of the pain of the ill, particularly children, who must endure the pain of incision without anaesthetic.

Despite my anticipation of a US-led

drive to postpone lifting the sanctions in order to completely flatten the military mechanism of the Iraqi army, I think Iraq will succumb and abide by the UN resolutions as a positive step towards Arab reconciliation prior to Arab-Israeli reconciliation. I call upon the UN to dispatch envoys to assess the declined standard of living on the ground. The kingdom of Babylon will not pass by whatever challenges are before it.

Ashraf Faragallah Saad  
English Language Teacher  
Beini Saef

**Antiquities alert**

Sir: Let us pray that we are able to stop the exhibition of Egyptian antiquities in America. I suspect Egypt is the only country in the world that exhibits its antiquities abroad

in exchange for merely a few dollars. Enough damage has been caused by previous exhibits abroad, which no repairs can bring back to their pristine state. Egypt has been trying for years to convince the British Museum to return the Sphinx's head, which cannot possibly be of any use to Britain.

So let me spare our antiquities from harm,

and let us think long and hard before deciding to move Ramses' statue, so that we are certain it will not be damaged during its moving.

Adel Boutros  
Engineer  
Helipolis

**Racism doesn't help**

Sir: Leah Rabin, when asked why her husband did not wear a bullet proof vest on the day of his assassination, replied that

her husband had told her there was no need because Israel is not Africa. The racism of that statement shocked me. As is evident from Rabin's murder, assassinations have nothing to do with the race of the assassin and everything to do with the popularity and love the leader inspires amongst his people. Whether in Africa or elsewhere, political leaders should learn from the ignorance of this statement.

Ali Mohamed Selim  
Port Said

**Positive force**

Sir: Egypt's membership in the UN Security Council, as representative of Africa, would be of benefit to both African and Arab countries. Given Egypt's excellent relations with many countries of the world, Egypt could be a positive force in

dealing with such issues as the UN sanctions imposed on Libya and Iraq, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Middle East peace process.

Sayed Ismail Bahri

Awyan

**Unnecessary expenses**

Sir: I would like to comment on the work being done to renovate the underpass before the airport on Salati Salem Street. I am baffled by the extravagant expense Egypt is paying to replace the tiles on the walls of the underpass with ceramic tiles. Is this really necessary? Do we really need to spend perhaps hundreds of thousands of pounds on minor renovations while, excuse me adage, people are starving?

Mohamed Mansour  
Helipolis

**Zoo in shambles**

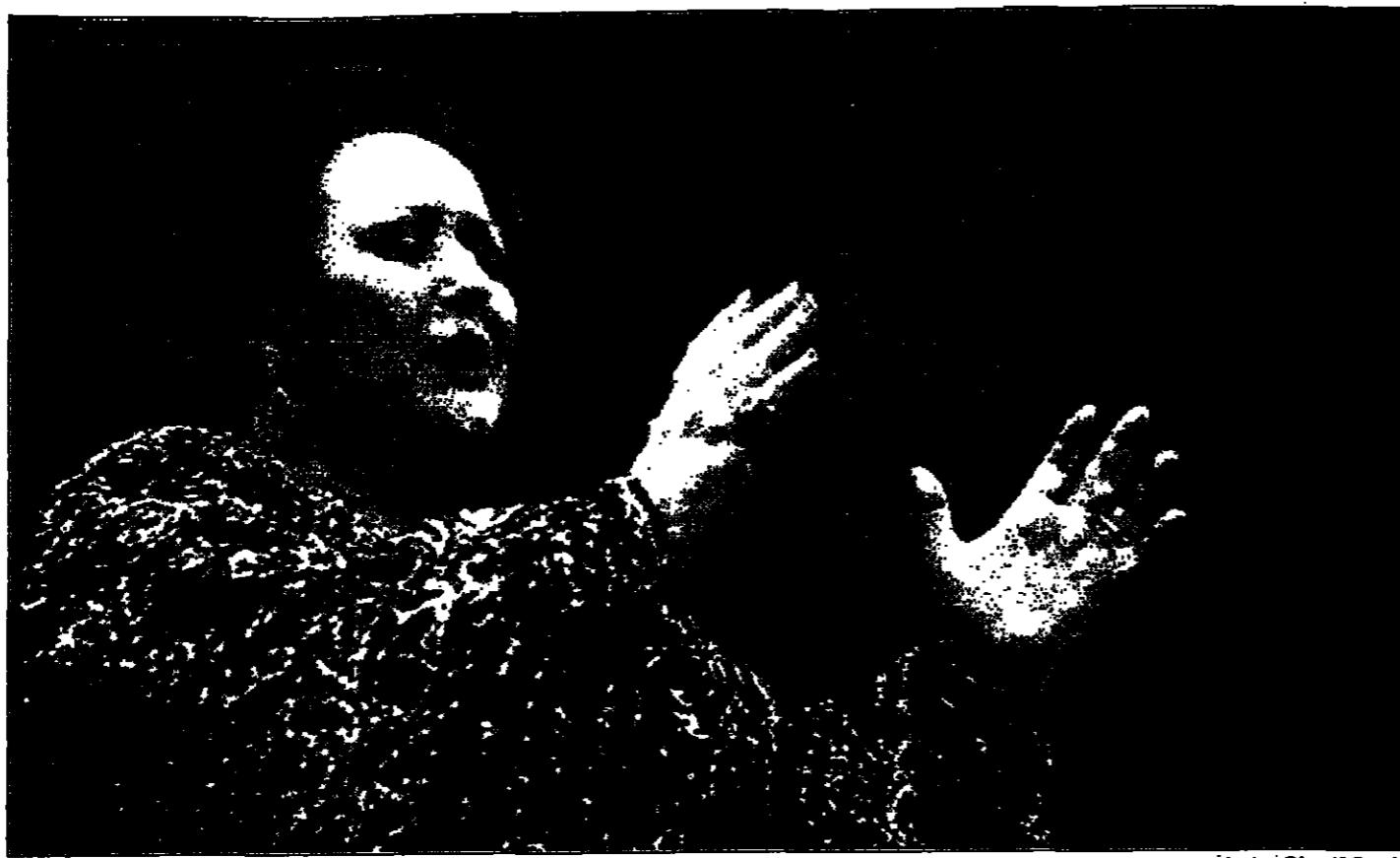
Sir: I would appreciate it very much if a member of your staff could investigate the efforts being made to renovate the Giza zoo. I read in the papers that a new supervisor is heading a renovation effort intended to spruce up the dirty grounds.

If I may offer some suggestions, I think it is imperative that the animal cages be rebuilt and kept clean. Also, a bit more effort should be put into directing people around the grounds in an orderly fashion.

This would most definitely necessitate the banning of all those bothersome vendors.

Sad Khatifa

Giza



Montserrat Caballé

photo: Sherif Sonbol

## Celestial sister

**Concert:** Montserrat Caballé Cairo Opera Orchestra; **Jose Collado, conductor;** Main Hall, Cairo Opera House; 7 January

Where is she? She is over there. She is coming. The Caballé presence says I am here; this is it. Listen and look. Caballé is in her place, on yet another opera house stage.

Great singers are all crepuscular animals, too beautiful to be human. They are creatures of the night, making their own light as Caballé does here. She's big and not young. These are invaluable virtues. If they keep their voices, the older the great ones get, the cuter they become. Every nuance of the art of singing is made audible and visible in this instance.

Caballé's appearance is the closest relative of her voice. The two are wrapped around each other, parent to child. She is a big lady, almost immense and immensely beautiful. She pads across the stage, her wrist and finger movements powerfully suave and fastidious, like her singing. A celestial monster, she excites before she has opened her mouth.

Take a good look at her. She is the last of her tribe; her planetary sisters are no longer around. Now she has taken her place center-stage front and prepares herself. If you think all the business of opera a giggle, then remember she is better at sending it up than anyone since Groucho Marx. She imitates herself better than anyone else can do. She is disaster-proof and a super-model. She wears clothes better than the 9 foot tall skinries. She knows how to decorate the product, herself, and stands on the stage like a Marie de Medicis.

Where does she come from? Spain, like Patti, Malibran and the rest of the Garcia tribe of singers. The Spanish voice has power and beauty, but among aficionados its special fascination is its mæstria. This gives to their every vocal utterance a power of actuality, never empty noise. It is extremely erotic.

Caballé has all these virtues. And the Cain Opera Orchestra, under José Collado lived up to her demands. There was a complicity between diva, conductor and orchestra. The contract was to have a good time.

### Theatre

## A witch minus the broom

Yusri El-Guindi's *Al-Sahra* (The Witch) took a long time arriving at the National, growing in the process from a slim one-act play into ponderous three-hour performance. It was six months in rehearsal, with occasional mishaps and forced breakoffs; ominously, one week before the scheduled opening, its director, Mohsen Helmi had a bad fall and had to limp through the final days with the help of a crutch. The dress rehearsal was a cheerless, disheartening experience, and weeks later, the play has not improved.

I had looked forward to Samia Ayoub's invigorating theatrical presence and expected from El-Guindi the kind of passionate writing and fresh insight that inform his best work. Besides, the presence of Mohsen Helmi — a director famous for his colourful, vigorous style — as head of the production team, augured well. It was his debut at the National and one did not doubt that he would seize the opportunity to shake this old respectable establishment and shame it out of its habitual smug solidity. The boisterous fairground atmosphere of his *chef-d'œuvre*, *El-Muhabazatiyyah* (Street Performers), was too much to hope for; but something of its zestful earthiness, galloping rhythm and imaginative visual

liveliness was definitely expected.

What happened, in fact, was a cacophonous clash of styles. While El-Guindi's dramatically undernourished and verbally grandiloquent text chased after grandiose effects, Helmi seemed desperately determined to undercut its bombastic declamations and prick its rhetorical bubbles. Ironically, the play's spuriously complex double-plot schema, with two different spatio-temporal levels and sets of characters, helped to exacerbate this sense of a conflict of artistic directions. The performance crept along laboriously, mercilessly jolting the audience from scene to scene and from one level to the other until one felt one was watching two unrelated plays — and flat dull ones at that. Not even Ayoub's bewitching art and mesmerising presence could heal the fissure or seal the cracks. And this is saying a lot.

In any part, Ayoub is always a pleasure to watch; her overpowering personality and stirring voice rarely fail to rouse the audience whatever the play. I have seen her breathe life into some of the dullest imaginable lines and endow some distantly shallow texts with imaginary depths. *The Witch*, however, beat her. She put up a valiant fight, but she did not even have the bare rudiments of a part to

work with. The original short version of the play, entitled *The Rape of Galila* (read the rape of Egypt), is illuminating in this respect. In it, the eponymous holier Galila — abusively nicknamed "the witch" by corrupt authorities though venerated by the poor and downtrodden — remains tantalisingly absent throughout. Only in the final scene does she appear — an ethereal figure in a bridal gown — to carry the soul of her slain hero and defender up to heaven. Obviously, this short, unpretentious political parable, with its typical popular hero, simple confrontations and vague, historical setting was neither fit for the National nor for a formidable star like Ayoub. It had to be re-tailored to new measurements and when the material, however stretched, proved insufficient, the author resorted to patching.

In the new version, Galila, though still safely out of sight, is provided with an all too tangible, vociferous Doppelganger in the figure of an all-seeing, interminably preaching good witch. As commentator-cum-narrator, she keeps intruding on the few events of the flimsy story, telling us what we have already seen, padding it up with rhyming frosty slogans and bombastic orations. Soon enough, her presence becomes not only positively boring, but

also, since the audience are neither deaf, blind nor dim, deeply offensive.

Still, rather than weary the audience into submission, the witch's unrelenting verbal avalanche alerts them to its underlying dangerous bigotry. Like the typical fanatic, her political creed is equated with absolute moral right and any opposition to it with diabolical malevolence. Indeed,

the confusion of politics and religion in this play is deeply disturbing and so is the progress of its folk hero from rebellion and lawlessness to *jihad*, or holy war then maryamid. One wonders if El-Guindi, an enlightened progressive intellectual, has unwittingly come under the influence of the arguments of the political Islamists.

The confusion was perceptible in the first version where twice the honourable bandit kneels as if facing a holy shrine. In the second it becomes quite pronounced, thanks to the loquacious witch.

To pad *The Rape of Galila* still further and make it look structurally elaborate, El-Guindi tucked a parallel plot, set in modern times, about a destitute citizen who robbed of his lawful inheritance by the government and reduced to a mechanical puppets, and worst of all, to note El-Guindi's unflinching, laborious striving after symbolism at every stop. What a lot of good, expensive talent was wasted in that show.

At the National, Nehad Selaiha watches with dismay as *The Witch* fails to get off the ground

leashes his tongue (not that he had been silent before) and we are treated to a full account of his misfortune and sorrows, punctuated with sentimental songs. At the end of it, the poor bureaucrat suddenly dead, and we are told that the "truth" killed him. More likely, it was boredom that did it.

The two stories, which are given mostly through narration, are arranged in alternating scenes to create a false impression of complexity and variety. But neither the alternation nor the plethora of witty songs and elaborate dances (roped in by the director) could do anything to alleviate the boredom or dispel the vexing feeling that one was being cheated.

It nearly broke my heart to listen to the great Ayoub ranting redundant banalities, to watch a consummate comedian like Osama Abbas limply repeating the same story over and over again and in the same ungraceful, spiritless language, to see some of the best actors of the National reduced to extras or to rigid mechanical puppets, and worst of all, to note El-Guindi's unflinching, laborious striving after symbolism at every stop. What a lot of good, expensive talent was wasted in that show.

Yusri's *Harat Arsh Misr* (The Women Who Shock Egypt's Throne)

*Lida 23* (Mona El-Sayed), Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm & 6pm.

Mohamed Nagui Museum

*Giza 1*

A permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mohamed Nagui (d. 1954), whose granite monument to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr Al-Nil Bridge.

### EXHIBITIONS

#### Adel El-Sawi (Paintings)

*Hilton pool level*

Daily 10am-5pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 12 Jan.

Recent works by a leading contemporary artist.

#### Mervet Refet (Paintings)

*Ramesses Hilton*

Daily 10am-5pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 12 Jan.

Paintings by a leading contemporary artist.

#### Mahmoud Makhbari Museum

*Tahrir St. Gezira*

Daily except Sun and Mon. 9am-1-3pm.

Fri. 11am-8pm. Until 11 Jan.

A permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Makhbari, painted by Gamal Helmi and Ghazi Hamed.

#### Saadia Da (Soma Don't)

*Al-Ahram Cultural Centre*

106 Qasr Al-Nil St. Garden City. Tel 353 3962.

11am-6pm. Until 11 Jan.

Works by Saadia Da.

#### Youssef Nabil (Photographs)

*Cairo-Berlin Gallery*

17 Years of Art

Cairo St. 660 Al-Zaytun. Tel 353 1764.

Daily except Sun. 1pm-5pm. Until 14 Jan.

Exhibition of works by New York-based photographer entitled Egypt, Land Under The Black Sun.

#### Yannis Manousakis

*Cairo-Berlin Gallery*

as above. 15-25 Jan.

Exhibition of paintings by Yannis Manousakis.

#### Omar El-Khaiat (Photographs)

*Lobby of the Jumeirah Center*

AUC. Al-Sherikha St. 1000 Al-Ramla

Daily except Sun. 1pm-5pm. Until 15 Jan.

Photographs by Omar El-Khaiat.

#### Leila Khaled (Paintings)

*Karim 1*

15 Saadaddin St. Downtown.

Daily 10am-5pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 15 Jan.

Paintings by Leila Khaled.

#### Leila Khaled (Paintings)

*Al-Sherikha St. 1000 Al-Ramla*

Daily except Sun. 1pm-5pm. Until 15 Jan.

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# When less is more

The Egyptian film industry has been undergoing a difficult period recently. Some call it a crisis while others, striking a more optimistic note, insist it is no more than a phase. But labels aside the hard fact remains — from an average of 70 films a year the number of productions has, in the past two years, dropped to a low of 20 films.

On the bright side, though, it may well be that filmmakers and critics have more to look forward to than to worry about in 1996. As overall costs have soared, sloppily low-budget productions have become an impossibility, which means that 1995 audiences were spared the cinematic mediocrities that have been such a feature of the industry. What, after all, is the point of making a lot of films if 90 per cent of them are bad? And the last few years have witnessed the emergence of a number of new filmmakers making their directorial debut in the Egyptian features market.

Despite the so-called crisis of the Egyptian film industry, brewing — if you believe everything you read — for several years now, this new generation of filmmakers managed to put out several very good films. But then for them the issue was less the possibility of making any old film, but a matter of making the films they wanted to make. Nor can the new crop of debut directors be accused of being novices. They have, after all, been involved in the film business for years, as scriptwriters, assistant directors, and in a whole host of other positions.

For them it has been a long haul, though the effort and the delays seem to have paid off. Last year three debut films were premiered in competitions at the 19th Cairo Film Festival.

According to film critic Kamal Ramzy there is nothing new in recent, vociferous claims about the death of Egyptian cinema. It has, he says, a history that comprises nothing other than overcoming crises, be they generated by fund raising, low profits, taxes or a seemingly inescapable reliance on foreign distribution.

"Of course," says Ramzy, "there is also the problem of often modest creativity. But even bad films often have 'something', and it is this something that provides the spark for new initiatives."

It is this that Ramzy accounts for the emergence of the distinctive styles that have characterised succeeding generations of Egyptian filmmakers since the 1950s. But the real crunch came, Ramzy believes, in the late 60s and 70s. Just as Egypt was coming to terms with the defeat of 67, so the open door policy began and *inflah* was born. The entire framework within which older directors had worked suddenly came to seem dinosauric. According to Ramzy a new generation of directors like Ra'fat El-Mihhi, Mohamed Khan, Atef El-Tayeb, Kheir Bishara, Ali Abdelsaleh and Ghaleb Shashut burst on the scene with vitality and energy. Similarly, in the last few years, newer talents have emerged: Radwan El-Kashef surprised us with *Leith Ya Banafiq* (Violets Are Blue), a big film, rich in emotions, which celebrated the ideal of friendship. Significantly El-Kashef did not rely on a literary tax as his source, but co-wrote the script with Sami El-Sawi.

"There were," El-Kashef says, "problems encountered during the pre-production stages. Some of the cast objected to the ending of the film — where the main character was meant to die. I was then obliged to alter the script in a way that would satisfy the actors without compromising my original ideas."

El-Kashef's *Violets Are Blue* was joined by Said Hamed's *Al-Hubb Fi-Talaga* (Love In The Refrigerator) in competition at the Cairo Film Festival in 1992. An auspicious start, but since then neither director has gone on to follow up his debut with a second feature. Part of the problem, Hamed believes, may be that the new generation of first-time directors are intent on stamping their films with an identity that is often idiosyncratic, and at odds with the expectations of producers.

"We are proud," Hamed insists, "not to merely re-

**Survivors of the crisis?**

**Injy El-Kashef and Hani Mustafa speak to the young directors on whom many hopes are pinned**



Ossama Fawzy's *Afari Al-Asfalt* (top) and Magdi Ahmed Ali's *Ya Donia Ya Gharami*

produce the kind of films that have had success in the past. Our aim is not to replicate audience favourites, nor to confirm the prejudices of either audience or producers. We want to present something that challenges. My new film is a product of the same scriptwriter/director combination that resulted in *Love in the Refrigerator*, and I hope it will be as innovative as my first, though in different ways.

Kamal Ramzy detects parallels between Hamed's extreme boldness in form and use of cinematic vocabulary and Ossama Fawzy's treatment of content and subject matter in his striking debut *Afari Al-Asfalt* (Asphalt Demons). And if an emergent sensibility can be said to link the new generation of directors, Ramzy would include among their number Magdi Ahmed Ali, whose *Ya Donia Ya Gharami* (My Life, My Passion) he describes as "a film full of will and hope amidst funeral times."

In some ways the career of Magdi Ahmed Ali is typical of his generation. For years he worked as an assistant director with, among others, Mohamed Khan and Kheir Bishara. But eventually he felt he had to put an end to executing other directors' ideas.

"I had no opinion in the film and I became afraid of losing my right to creativity. I had no intentions of continuing my career as an assistant, and so I quit."

But what awaits the assistant director who is tired by the first part of his job description? If Ali's experience

is anything to go by what awaits is a period of struggle. One needs immense perseverance to raise the finance that will allow an assistant director to direct his first film though the fact that Magdi Ahmed Ali was by no means an unknown quantity may have helped.

He had already written several scripts, one of which had been met with approval by those critics who bothered to read it. It was called *Al-Balad* (The Country), but no one wanted to produce it. Ali graduated from the Cinema Institute. "Then there was no real work opportunity for the new generation of aspiring directors. Cinema was impossible, inconceivable without stars. But things are very different now. As a matter of fact, my next film stars Ahmed Zaki, and my first involved three female stars."

Ali's next film promises to focus on the same socio-economic groups that took centre stage in *Ya Donia Ya Gharami*. "I can't imagine making a film about a doctor or an engineer. When I think film, these are the only people that come to my mind."

Said Hamed elaborates that in the light of the circumstances that the country is going through, making of the poor the great majority of society, it is only normal that new directors should focus so intensely on this majority.

"The well-to-do," Magdi Ahmed Ali elaborates, "nowadays inhabit a different world. They don't belong to reality any more. But less privileged people, jobless, homeless, hopeless people, are the ones here. And they are the biggest audience for our films. Earlier directors have ridiculed them; others have idolised them, we just want to relate to them as human beings."

Film director and critic Mohamed Shebl insists that films which have been produced over the last two years have dealt with "very volatile and aggressive subjects. It is not the usual commercial drivel that we have been watching," he says. According to Shebl, most people claim that new directors are flocking to television and satellite stations in an attempt to escape the cinema crisis; "but this is not necessarily true. Real, radical directors do have something to say usually can't say it on television. They are persistent."

Not only that, claims Shebl. He feels that new directors want to reach audiences abroad and make it on the international film scene. "Since they are aiming at the international market, which is a giant leap for Egyptian cinema, they are forced to enhance the quality of their work. Not only in content, but also in sound, picture and editing standards." And should they succeed the spin-offs will, Shebl insists, be enormous. More and better films.

To conclude, Kamal Ramzy's advice is simple:

"The first film is like a first baby — it is painful but the pain sinks in retrospect. And if the film succeeds, the second may be more difficult but less painful."

## Plain Talk

What do we mean when we say that we want to bring culture to the people? What culture and what people? In an age of strict stratification, it seems odd that we are still fond of making generalisations and of using vague words like "society" and the "masses".

The slogan "art for the people" has echoed across revolutions. Though at some level it expresses a noble sentiment, it nevertheless sounds condescending and patronising, the implication being that the government is doing the people a favour. Born at a time when a collector of masterpieces would be regarded as an enemy of the people, the slogan gave voice to the feeling that the old culture was elitist and should be done away with.

The idea of "art for the people" began to be implemented when, for the first time, the old opera house opened its doors to workers. It was quite a sight: simple, robust people loitering in the corridors where in olden times only aristocrats had gently trod.

When it opened its doors to the general public, the opera house changed its role. It had to give the members of the new public what they wanted. The change was not so much to give the plebeians high culture in the form of ballet and opera, but rather, it was, like the storming of the Bastille, an assertion of the people's authority. The spirit in which the change occurred bespoke a sentiment different from the motto of the Irish twilight ("give the people what is high until it becomes popular"). What it seemed to say was: "Let the people see what the country's previous masters enjoyed." But eventually it became simply a question of giving the people what they wanted and what they could understand against a backdrop of pomp and circumstance. This is why the opera house began to present Egyptian operas.

Nationalism and chauvinism have no place in an opera house. Opera houses, by nature, are places where the best of high culture is presented. Italian opera, French and Russian ballets and so on are part of the repertoire of opera houses all over the world. Even Wagner's *Ring Sequence* continues to be a part of the repertoire.

The current Cairo Opera House complex has a programme that I heartily endorse, one which is not dissimilar to those presented at the Lincoln Centre in New York or the Kennedy Centre in Washington. Like them, the Cairo Opera House is a complex hosting diverse activities, ranging from film shows to lectures, seminars and art exhibitions.

But the Cairo Opera House has also revived its role as a centre for what is often termed high culture. More importantly, it is not xenophobic and embraces what is good in other cultures. Art knows no boundaries. May it always be so.

Mursi Saad El-Din

## Books

### A sociable commentator

*Muzakirati Fi Nisf Qarn* (My Memoirs of Half a Century), Ahmed Shafik Pasha, vol I, Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organisation, 1994

On 18 May 1860 a child was born in Sayeda Zeinab who was to play an important role within the absolute monarchy that ruled Egypt. He was party to innumerable decisions taken, conspiracies hatched, intrigues enacted.

Ahmed Shafik enjoyed the patronage of the khedive. He was, too, to render a great service to future historians, largely through his compilation of *Egypt's Political Annals*, a massive undertaking that resulted in ten volumes containing some 10,500 pages and 15,000 illustrations. This invaluable work includes the texts of speeches, press commentary and other minutiae of political life from the age of Mohamed Ali to the administration of Sidki Pasha in the 1930s.

Ahmed Shafik's memoirs, on the other hand, cover the period between 1860 and 1923. And from this mass of material the General Egyptian Book Organisation has chosen to reprint two volumes, the first covering the period from 1873 to the death of Khedive Tewfik in January 1892, the second the years from 1892 to 1902. Two further volumes remain in the pipeline.

The tone of the memoirs is intimate and revelatory as Shafik discusses many subjects that at the time would have been considered taboo, or at the very least inappropriate. The attention to detail betrays Shafik's role as a functionary, albeit one who had access to a vast number of public figures, portraits of which spice his text.

Shafik's father had held public office under the khedives Said and Ismail as well as in the early part of the rule of the Khedive Tewfik. His career culminated with his appointment as general inspector of finance for the Governorate of Daqahliya, at the time a powerful position. Shafik's mother was of Circassian origin, a slave freed by Ali El-Bakri. Shafik was lucky enough to be among the 20 children of functionaries whose education Tewfik, then heir to the throne, undertook to finance. The royal patron, according to Shafik, was very attentive to his wards, inviting them on Fridays to promenades and lunch at the Al-Qubba Palace and pausing occasionally to exchange pleasantries with them, occasionally handing out freshly minted silver coins.

Shafik received his schooling first at Al-Muktadaria and then Al-Qubba school, the latter having been founded by his royal patron. After graduating Shafik worked as a demonstrator at Al-Qubba School, then as a clerk in the Foreign Languages Department where his monthly salary was 600 piastres. He eventually moved to another clerical position in the Office of Public Records, housed in the Citadel.

By the time Tewfik ascended the throne Shafik had become an attorney within the khedival department, from which position he had witnessed the fall end of the rule of Ismail. He discusses the final, fateful years of Ismail's reign, chronicling in detail the extravagance and Europeanising impulse of the khedive. The enormous expenses incurred by Ismail in bribing the Sublime Porte as he attempted to buy autonomy are well-documented, as is Ismail's lavish building programme and wasteful extravagance.

In his capacity as a court employee Shafik attended royal weddings and gives vivid sketches of the celebrations that marked the betrothal of Ismail's sons. The trousseaux of royal brides are itemised and the menus



served at wedding parties discussed alongside the vast array of entertainments to which guests were treated.

*Moulids* receive their fair share of commentary, particularly that of the Prophet, as Shafik describes the congregation of Sufi sects, their processions and ceremonies, with the sheikh of Al-Sa'dia sect on horseback riding over the torsos of dozens of followers lying on their backs. Glass is consumed in great quantity at such events, and any number of snakes charmed. In tones that more than smack of bourgeoisie dis-

approval he recalls his sighting of a man who calls himself Ali Kaka, dressed in a white *galabiyah* belted with a rope from which is suspended "what resembles an enlarged sexual organ". Ali Kaka, it seems, carried a whip in his hand as he engaged in flirtatious repartee with the boy who accompanied him, drawing crowds of men and women.

In documenting the inner workings of Ismail's palaces Shafik enlisted the help of his mother-in-law, the wife of Rafigh Pasha, a close confidante of the princesses. Ismail had four wives, each residing with her retinue.

Good ideas and raw talent, though, are never quite enough.

"In the film business, like everywhere else, you have to have someone act as the backbone, someone to help you into the scene," explains Ali.

Radwan El-Kashef discovered other difficulties. He complains about the lack of efficient production managers. "There were production problems caused not so much by a lack of capital but by the inefficiency of the

khedive to spy on Ismail because Tewfik suspected his father of plotting a return to power.

Throughout his career Shafik was never to have a patron like Tewfik, the khedive whom he served throughout his reign and at whose bedside he was to be found in 1892, as his patron lay dying. A history of loyal service, and one that provided the author of these memoirs a vantage point from which to survey one of the seminal episodes of modern Egyptian history — the Urabi uprising and its defeat, followed by the occupation of the British.

Urabi's defeat, while it may well have saved Khedive Tewfik, also marked his final submission to the British. Yet despite his allegiance to the khedive, Shafik's account of the turbulent events surrounding the revolution and its aftermath is at once detached, meticulous and lucid.

Though Shafik's testimony on the Urabi Revolution differs little from the narratives of most other historians, his position lends the account an immediacy that others lack, particularly when it comes to scenes of the khedive hiding in Ras Al-Tin Palace, waiting for the British forces to occupy the country and rescue his throne. And of course, on 17 July 1882 Admiral Seymour did enter Alexandria, announcing that the khedive had entrusted him with enforcing law and order. Yet it was over two months later that Khedive Tewfik finally left Ras Al-Tin, accompanied by

British consul-general, his carriage escorted by mounted British soldiers. So it was he travelled to the railway station and boarded the train that took him to Cairo, where he was met by a similar procession to escort him to the Gezira Palace. (Abdin Palace, ironically, was at that point still occupied by General Wolseley, commander of the British troops.) In a rather touching footnote, Shafik records the gratitude of the khedive to those couriers who had remained at his side during the crisis. His salary was raised from LE12 to LE20 a month.

Safely ensconced on his throne, Khedive Tewfik threw a series of lavish banquets for his "liberators". These are recorded in customary detail, including one particularly spectacular evening at the Gezira Palace at which even Shafik, a man who had seen much and heard even more, felt obliged to wax lyrical about the magnificence of the foods and entertainments.

Dutifully Shafik goes on to chronicle the final years of Tewfik's reign. He accompanies the khedive to the Delta at the height of the cholera epidemic of 1883, records the formation of local courts and the appointment of a British under-secretary at the Ministry of Interior. He plots the growth in commercial activity and the introduction of various new fangled inventions, including the telephone. He expresses his vexation at the British annexation of Sudan.

In 1885, Shafik travelled to Paris to study political science. His account of his stay in France provides an interesting counterpoint to Rifai Rafiq Al-Tahtawi's documentation of his own, earlier sojourn. While Tahtawi devoted much time and effort to recording the constitution and law of France and enumerating the political rights enjoyed by its citizens and the signs of advancement in the country, Shafik Pasha strikes a more personal note, recording impressions of Parisian parks, theatres and cabarets, the amazing variety of French wine and parties attended.

Shafik seems to have been the most sociable of men, and very little escapes his eye. The present volume concludes with Shafik's return to Egypt, and finds him lamenting many of the changes that had occurred, a lament that culminates with the death of the khedive and a detailed description of the funeral.

An eyewitness account then, but one from a very privileged position, full of insider information and the kind of concrete details that bring a period to life. In short Shafik's memoirs are an important constituent of the biography of monarchist Egypt.

Reviewed by Mahmoud El-Wardani

# Engineering change

High-ranking government officials, scholars and professionals gathered to discuss major issues from housing to earthquakes, marketing to urban planning. Nermene El-Nawawi attended

The fourth Al-Azhar Engineering International Conference (AEIC) came to a close last week. Participants agreed on the need to link market and national needs to research topics, especially in environment, urban planning, earthquake-resistant design, and planning to avoid damage caused by flooding. To achieve progress, cooperation and scientific agreements with international universities and research centres must be increased, participants advised. The conference also recommended establishing ties between universities and production centres in industry, government, private enterprises and other agencies.

The bi-annual conference, which lasted for five days, was held under the auspices of Sheikh Gad El-Haq Ali Gad El-Haq, Sheikh of Al-Azhar; the honorary chairmanship of Professor Ahmed Omar Hashem, president of Al-Azhar University; and the chairmanship of Professor Mohamed El-Nawawi, dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Al-Azhar University. Guests at the inauguration ceremony were: Engineer Salah Hassaballah, Minister of Housing and Utilities; Dr Ibrahim Fawzi, Minister of Industry and Mineral Wealth; and Dr Mohamed Ibrahim Soliman, Minister of Development and New Communities.

"This bi-annual event has established a very sound reputation among universities, research centres, industrial establishments and military and governmental institutions," said Hashem.

The conference is perhaps the first to encompass all engineering specialisations: mechanical, civil, electrical, architectural, regional and city planning, systems and computers, mining and petroleum engineering," El-Nawawi said. His diversity explains the high turnout of researchers, scientists and professors of engineering, he added.

Representatives of 35 Arab, Islamic and foreign countries participated in the conference. "Eighty-eight scientific sessions and guest lectures were scheduled and attended by more than 1,000 participants in the conference," said professor Hussein Abbas, vice-chairman of the conference. "The 500 papers presented and discussed throughout the conference were published in 11 volumes, arranged in accordance with the relevant specialisations," he added.

Professor Tarek Khalil, dean of the Graduate School of Miami University, gave a lecture on technology management. As the president of the International Association for the Management of Technology, he explained the enormous change in technology and its effect on the development

and wealth of individuals, enterprises and nations. "I tried to shed light on the necessary preparations required to cope with such effects," he said. "Manpower, innovations, economic development are the key words for a bigger share in the market and an upper hand in competitiveness," Khalil added.

Professor Ahmed Ghoubarah, chairman of the Civil and Mechanical Engineering Department, McMaster University, Canada, presented the latest scientific findings, whether theoretical or practical, in adapting structural design to withstand dynamic loads as earthquake shocks. "Treatment of such shocks includes new approaches in design and in the selection of structure materials used in building," he said.

Professor Mohamed Omar Ezzat, head of the quality assurance division in a leading US corporation, one of the largest shareholders in the automotive component supplies industry, presented a lecture on quality assurance and enterprise accreditation for acquisition of systems like the ISO-9000 series (1,2,3 and 4). "For companies to become global in trading with other nations, they must have a quality system recognised by the international community and have the confidence of the customer by delivering quality products on time," Ezzat said.

Professor Abdel-Halim Omar of Carlton University, Canada, gave a series of presentations on road design and maintenance issues. "We mainly emphasised the importance of such issues and their relations to the advancement and progress of the economies of different nations," he said.

Special attention was also given to the problems of young people and recent graduates, especially the unemployment crisis. A seminar for specialists from the Social Development Fund introduced the importance of the role of scientific research in the development of small businesses and projects. Conditions required for the success of small businesses such as finance, equipment, material, manpower and marketing were discussed.

The conference also covered other topics of social, economic and political importance, such as the environment, energy, communication and transport, architecture and regional planning, production and automation, systems and computers and many others.

Recommendations covered a wide spectrum of fields, with special attention given to developing undergraduate and graduate educational programmes.



Earthquake damage and ways to minimise it were important items on the agenda. photo: Yves Paris

## Damage-free disposal

This year, the first hospital incinerator conceived and constructed nationally will come into operation. Mahmoud Bakr reports

The garbage collected from hospitals every day represents one of the greatest dangers to public health. It contains a great amount of plastic in the form of packaging materials, plastic bottles and disposable plastic syringes, steel needles (many of which are liable to carry infectious germs), left-over blood from blood banks, soiled bandages and expired medicines, to name just a few of the items liable to be found in the hospital's garbage disposal containers. Until recently these items were disposed of in the same way as household garbage, with no thought as to the possible toxicity or germ contents of the waste, says Dr Mohamed El-Zarqa head of the Quality of Environment sector with the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) and one of the masterminds of a project aimed at disposing of hospital waste scientifically. Part of the waste was formerly purchased with a view to recycling, either despite the dangers entailed or because of the collectors' ignorance of possible threats to their health, he adds.

The first incinerator entirely conceived and built by Egyp-

tians is intended to solve this problem once it is installed in all hospitals. This alternative method of waste disposal, which has been in the planning stage for some time now, has involved experts from the Health, Scientific Research and Environment Ministries. The Ministry of Scientific Research, in collaboration with the EEAA, has produced the first model for an incinerator that will be attached to every hospital in Egypt in the future, burning refuse without the danger of noxious fumes escaping and polluting the atmosphere, in compliance with the 1994 Environment Law.

The first model was constructed in a military factory and it is expected that its cost, once production reaches industrial proportions, will vary between LE12,000 and LE18,000 a unit.

A committee was formed including doctors from Qasr Al-Aini and Cairo University's Medical School Hospital, scientists from Ain Shams University, experts from the EEAA and the Ministry of Scientific Research as well as the engineers responsible for the construction of the model. The team's task was to analyse the

incinerated matter and the fumes resulting from the process, and to assess the performance of the incinerator under normal conditions. Over a period of four months, ordinary garbage was collected from Qasr Al-Aini hospital and processed through the incinerator daily. The data was compiled and the characteristics of each component burned was subjected to a series of tests.

The EEAA then convened a three-day workshop from 19 to 21 December, in order to train all Egyptian hospital staff (including that of governorate hospitals) involved in the garbage collection operation in the correct methods of handling the different categories of hospital refuse and keeping a log book indicating the origin and nature of the items disposed of, in compliance with Article 4 of the 1994 Environment Law.

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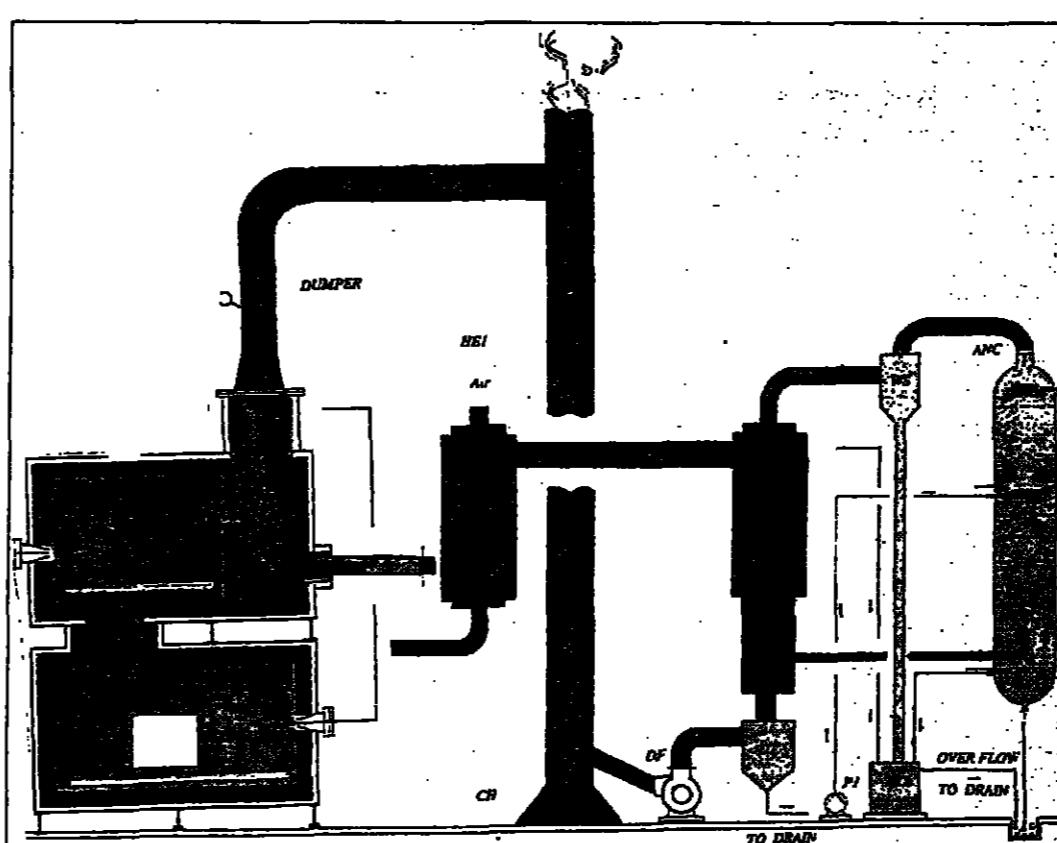


Diagramme of the first incinerator constructed in the military workshops

Safra Dayma

**Restaurant review**

## Separate tables

Nigel Ryan discovers the perfect place to end it all

### Ingredients:

Tipps and stems of last week's spinach  
1/2 kilo of veal or beef chunks  
1 kilo of tomatoes (squeezed)  
1 tbsp. of tomato paste  
1 onion (finely chopped)  
1 tbsp. crushed garlic  
150 grams of dried hummus soaked and tenderly boiled  
Butter or oil

### Method:

Wash well the tipps and stems. Fry the onion and garlic until yellowish in colour, then fry in the meat for a few minutes. Pour over the tomato juice and paste. Leave until the sauce thickens and the meat is tender. Season, then put in the spinach tips and stems, lower the heat and leave to cook. Drain the hummus from its waters by means of a sieve. Make sure it is not over-cooked so that it takes its proper time to cook with the spinach. Half an hour before removing from heat, put the hummus in until the stew thickens. Serve with rice and green salad.

**Moushira Abdel-Malek**

Champollion is one of my favourite streets in downtown Cairo. And after sunset the southern end of the street, the end near Tahrir, undergoes something of a transformation. For several metres the pavement is littered with tables and chairs, with groups of people sitting, drinking, smoking shisha and sometimes eating. It is, incidentally, one of the few places left in town where you can happily sit on the pavement and enjoy a beer.

The tables are an extension of Shehan, a newish establishment that seems, somehow, never to have quite taken off. It is a large establishment, occupying three floors. There is a takeaway section on the ground floor. On the first floor is a closed restaurant and on the third a "rooftop". It was to the latter I climbed.

The rooftop is indeed on the roof, though because it is winter the sides have been enclosed in the kind of multicoloured tenting fabric that is used for weddings, funerals and construction sites. You sit on benches. Perhaps the leftover New Year decorations — tatty tinsel and the remains of balloons — made the atmosphere a little more desultory than it might otherwise be. The mood of the place is evocative. It seems the exclusive preserve of courting couples who, judging by the expressions on their faces, are on the verge of ending their relationships. Through this slightly gloomy space two waitresses trot efficiently enough, smiling and trying to spread a little good cheer.

Shehan deserves a lighter clientele. The people who sit on the pavement always seem cheery enough. They should be encouraged to come inside in an attempt to dispel the depression which, it would appear, is currently the preserve only of those who seek the inner sanctum.

The menu is a straightforward affair, broken into five sections. You can choose from Lunch Basket, Oriental Course, Chicken Sandwich Corner, Meat Corner and Other Sandwiches. I choose from the Oriental Course — vegetable tagine with beef, rice and salad. The person I was lunching with had Mexican chicken. Both came along with a separate order of french fries.

Now, though the orders were taken promptly, the food took some time to arrive, which is unfortunate because it allows the spirit of the place time to descend. But eventually the food did arrive. The tagine came in an earthenware pot — french beans, carrots, potatoes, onion and beef in a sauce that consisted mostly of tomato puree. If this sounds unappetising I apologise, because it was actually quite good. I suppose it is really just form of nursery food, the kind of thing people remember from their childhoods. And though it is not the sort of meal you would want everyday, on a rooftop, protected from the January cold only by a stretch of tenting fabric, it served its purpose admirably.

The Mexican chicken comprised pieces of chicken breast fried with red and green peppers. It, too, had more than a hint of tomato puree. The french fries were made from real potatoes rather than those reconstituted frozen things.

The food at Shehan does not try hard. It is unambitious and consequently does not disappoint. The bill, when it came, was another pleasant surprise. With two soft drinks it was less than LE30. If the customers would only smile as much as the waitresses, it might have charm. As it was I left feeling full, though not of the joys of spring.

**Shehan**, 8, Champollion. Downtown. Tel: 5781413/5754863

## Al-Ahram Weekly Crossword

By Samia Abdennour

### ACROSS

- |   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1. Beseach earnestly (4)  | 47. Contemporary (5)                                 | 1. Residue (4)                                    | 48. An emblem on Athenian coins (3)            |
| 5. Nazi leader, sentenced to life imprisonment in 1946 (4)  | 49. Baste; stich (3)                                 | 21. Alienation (12)                               | 51. Health resort (3)                          |
| 9. Cringe (5)   | 50. Pricks (6)                                       | 23. Consum (3)                                    | 53. Musical note (3)                           |
| 14. Queue; telephone cable (4)  | 52. Unwired wild herbs (5)                           | 26. ... and behold! (2)                           | 55. Appropriate; make one's own (5)            |
| 16. Like sheep (5)  | 54. A division of the calyx (5)                      | 27. Lady's garment (3)                            | 57. Allurement (5)                             |
| 17. Spout; radiate (4)  | 56. Duck with soft feathers used to stuff quilts (5) | 30. First lady (3)                                | 58. Summon; call up spirit from the dead (5)   |
| 18. Breezy (4)  | 58. Of unsound mind (3)                              | 31. Dined (5)                                     | 59. M. Coty et al (5)                          |
| 19. Alights; grounds (5)  | 60. Sleeveless outer garment worn by Arabs (3)       | 33. Solid substance left after heating petrol (4) | 60. Encourage (4)                              |
| 20. Selective Service System (3)  | 62. Carried or transported (5)                       | 34. Agape (4)                                     | 61. Male gummy pig (4)                         |
| 21. Be mistaken (3)   | 64. Agape (4)  | 35. Hippolyte (4)                                 | 62. Quaintly artistic (4)                      |
| 22. Guided (3)  | 66. Remore (3)                                       | 37. Dined (5)                                     | 64. Sense (4)                                  |
| 24. Superstitive suffix (3)   | 67. First lady (3)                                   | 38. Keats or Shelley (4)                          | 65. Poker stake (4)                            |
| 25. Follows closely (5)   | 68. Carried or transported (5)                       | 39. Solid substance left after heating petrol (4) | 66. Weather directions (3)                     |
| 27. Brute; animal (5)   | 70. Appointed (5)                                    | 40. Wash out (4)                                  | 67. US short story writer, critic and poet (3) |
| 29. Additional; different (5)   | 71. Comb. form for "fur" (4)                         | 41. Eggs (3)                                      | 68. Frost (3)                                  |
| 32. Plural of hers (6)  | 72. Ogen (4)   | 42. Ferments grape juice (4)                      |  |
| 36. Time worn; aged (3)   | 73. Residue (4)                                      | 43. Heavy weights (4)                             |  |
| 37. Competitor (5)  | 74. Ogen (4)   | 44. Goals (4)                                     |  |
| 41. Assault (3)   | 75. When repeated, form of cheering speaker (4)      | 45. Busy insect (3)                               |  |
| 42. Shield-shaped (7)   | 76. ... and behold! (2)                              |   |  |
| 44. Injurious; foul (7)   | 77. Fifty are five of these (4)                      |   |  |
| 45. Brotherhood (5)   | 78. Lady's garment (3)                               |   |  |
| 46. SPARE, BILLION, COMING, LOOSE, BELIEVE, OMEN, USES, BLOOZE, BLIND, BIZZARD, IDENCE, LOTUS, LILED, CEDAR, NIL  | 79. Fifty-five are five of these (4)                 |   |  |
| 47. TRAIL, IN, FLIGHT, CRU, HOVE, CRAVE, SHOT, AMEN, RAGED, FAIR, CART, EMERY, BOER, TINT, APERTY, CESTIL, PAST, CHAIR, ASPIRE, HIRE, ALLEG, ELLIT, EDIT, SALON, NING, RELIVY, PISCOS, SATE | 80. Plan; level (4)                                  |   |  |
| 48. ... and behold! (2)   | 81. Ancient Egyptians' god; goddess of fertility (4) |   |  |
| 49. ... and behold! (2)   | 82. French dream (4)                                 |   |  |
| 50. ... and behold! (2)   | 83. Summer (4)                                       |   |  |
| 51. ... and behold! (2)   | 84. To ... with love (3)                             |   |  |
| 52. ... and behold! (2)   | 85. Manner; fashion (3)                              |   |  |
| 53. ... and behold! (2)   | 86. Intentional unfriendly treat (3)                 |   |  |
| 54. ... and behold! (2)   | 87. Advanced (4)                                     |   |  |
| 55. ... and behold! (2)   | 88. Round (5)  |   |  |
| 56. ... and behold! (2)   | 89. Wash out (4)                                     |   |  |
| 57. ... and behold! (2)   | 90. Heavy weights (4)                                |   |  |
| 58. ... and behold! (2)   | 91. Goals (4)  |   |  |
| 59. ... and behold! (2)   | 92. Frost (3)  |   |  |

Last week's solution



## No penny for my thoughts

Good and bad, right or wrong, such are the first values introduced in any educational process as soon as a child is able to stand up in his/her crib. More often than not, these concepts are enforced by means of religious instruction and/or threats of losing parental love. As a child, I had to contend with the added burden of possessing my own guardian angel, who wept bitterly when I erred on the side of independence, but smiled approvingly when I obeyed my elders. This particular angel had a tendency to become inordinately upset — or so I was told — whenever I had it in my mind to follow my own inclinations. Moreover, he/she (it?) had the power to penetrate my innermost thoughts and, reading my mind clearly, detect the seeds of naughtiness before they had even begun to sprout. To stop "bad thoughts" from entering my mind I practiced *sotto voce* nonsensical incantations, which seemed to work up to a point but undoubtedly convinced many who knew me then that I was slightly retarded.

My grandmother, who was on intimate terms with my angel, informed me of his/her moods on a daily basis and sometimes warned me cryptically that he/she would abandon me the day I "lost my innocence". He/she would only be back one last time to help me across the Styx. I would be well advised to have a clear conscience than, because, she said, the angel was good at keeping books. I never managed to elucidate what "my innocence" consisted of and slowly, I began to lose interest, letting the wind of rebellion dissipate the impenetrable mystery. With time I became more and more confident that I could settle my accounts favourably at the time of the crossing, which I was sure was a long way away. Soon I was experimenting with ideas, albeit secretly; I let some bad ones enter my mind; having heard no heart-wrenching laments from the heavens I graduated to following up with practical applications, which I was happy to note, brought nobody's wrath upon my head. But these days of bliss were counted. With the angel momentarily out of the way, a new obstacle was hinder my initiatives. With adolescence, the bogey of "what will people say" began to loom over every one of my actions. Whereas as by now large, the angel had been concerned with things abstract, "what will people say" invaded my entire world spanning the gamut from the expression of a physical need or a simple wish to the way I held the fish knife. Considering that my guardian angel had not departed without leaving his mark, my teen years became a time of great constraints.

Moulded by these taboos, I married a man who professed to be a liberal, when he was concerned that is. His nearest and dearest were actively encouraged to share his opinions. "You are absolutely right", became the Open Sesame to marital peace.

In the '60s, initiative, competitiveness and ambition went out of fashion, to be replaced by a "love thy neighbour no matter what" kind of attitude. Although I found it sickening on the whole, I refrained from expressing such a passé opinion. When my daughter was commended at school for allowing a "less privileged" child to copy her math test, I joined my congratulatory voice to that of her teachers. That both children received a failing grade was an indication that she was bonding well with her classmates in the happy mediocrity that seemed the ultimate goal of the new philosophy. I had every reason to rejoice. I also stopped describing some of my fellow men and women as cretins, morons, thieves and criminals. They were just "people" and as long as they "did their best" they were not to be held responsible for their bad behaviour. Society was. As nobody bothered to explain what their best entailed and as permissiveness seemed to be the order of the day, I was quite happy to chant in unison at the PTA meetings "he is OK, she is OK, we are all OK" and deride old-fashioned schools which in this day and age still insisted on homework and such archaic notions as discipline. I thus became a cool mother.

In this last decade I have been busy exploring the arena of political correctness and learning the jargon. I am almost fluent now, but the rumour has it that the whole concept may soon be outdated. That doesn't bother me in the least; I have become an expert at adopting ready-made ideas: whatever comes next, I will rise to the occasion. The question, however, is when, before my angel makes his/her final come-back, will I be allowed to think my own thoughts?

Fayza Hassan

# The promise of progress

The recent introduction of foreign-language sections in the Law and Commerce faculties of Egypt's national universities was in response to concerns about the ability of graduates to compete in an international arena that values language skills and insists upon a familiarity with foreign legal, business, and financial systems. New departments, sometimes with external support, were set up at Cairo, Alexandria and Ain Shams universities. Now that the first graduates have joined the job-market, *Al-Ahram Weekly* surveys the sections and asks, have the new departments fulfilled their promise?

## Education for abroad

Will the new foreign-language divisions at Cairo University qualify Egyptian students to compete, asks **Nirmeen Nizar**

To the casual observer, mystery, even suspicion, might seem to dominate Cairo University's Faculties of Law and Commerce these days. Although students continue to enrol in the same school, recent changes in the language of instruction and curriculum have divided the student body between those studying primarily in foreign languages and those who continue to receive instruction in Arabic. Some students display remarkable ignorance of their colleagues' studies and activities. "We see students going up and down the stairs every day, but we know nothing about them," commented Ramia Abaza, a student in the Faculty of Law's Arabic department.

In reality, however, there is little mystery. These new students are simply subscribing to the old adage, "necessity is the mother of invention" — the invention being, in this case, the use of English and French in the national universities, such as Cairo University. Strictly speaking, these new departments are not that "new" either; for years an English-language department existed at Helwan University's Faculty of Commerce and International Trade, but it was only in 1991 that a similar division was opened at Cairo University. Motivating the decision to expand the use of foreign-language instruction was the rapidly changing international business climate, and worries about the competitiveness and qualifications of Egyptian students. "The arbitration of international trade disputes is done in English," said Mahmoud El-Sharqawi, dean of Cairo University's Faculty of Law. "In addition, international law cases, by their very nature, require the ability to communicate effortlessly in English." With few English-speaking Egyptian lawyers to be found, Egyptians have been forced to turn to foreign law offices, and consequently have had to pay high legal fees. Increasing the number of Egyptian arbitrators, said El-Sharqawi, would save millions of dollars in unnecessary legal fees.

The primary aim of these programmes, however, is not just to save money, but to instruct Egyptian students better on how to negotiate, and how to wheel and deal, with their foreign counterparts in the business and legal worlds. Consequently, many courses, such as those concerning the Anglo-American legal systems, Economy and International Law, in the Law Faculty's curriculum are taught in English. To ensure that these students also acquire an education useful in Egypt, other courses, such as those in the *Shari'a* and those concerning legal presentations, are taught in Arabic. The end result, it is hoped, will be a lawyer or professional who has one foot firmly planted in Egypt and one foot abroad.

On paper, then, the programmes sound good, and they address an obvious need. But proof of their attractiveness and ability to meet market demands must be found in the number of students opting for the new programmes, and not in their theoretical aims. While it is still a little early to tell how the new division at the Law Faculty is faring, since the English language division was started only this year, the Faculty of Commerce's programme seems to have been highly successful. When the programme was launched in 1991, 150 students enrolled; the number has now risen dramatically to 900. The Arabic division has about 2,800 students.

The Faculty of Law, however, has another foreign-language programme that is also designed to meet the needs of international effectiveness. Five years ago, the school introduced a French department as part of a cultural exchange programme between Egypt and France. Students enrolled in it earned a Masters degree in Law awarded by the Sorbonne in Paris. Acceptance was based on the results of a written and oral exam in French, along with overall scholastic aptitude.

Another programme was then launched where students could take a series of courses leading to the French *licence* (Bachelors) degree, also from the Sorbonne. Students in this programme attend lectures, given at Cairo University by French professors, which cover the same material as is taught by their counterparts in Paris. At the end of the year, a professor from the Sorbonne comes to Egypt to administer oral exams; the written exams are sent by diplomatic pouch to France. School officials note that a major drawback to this programme is that, because of its French emphasis, it does not qualify graduates to practice law in Egyptian courts. To meet this objection, a further Franco-Egyptian agreement is being negotiated whereby students would also be able to attend courses at Cairo University's Faculty of Law, thus giving them the necessary additional qualification.

This stage of the agreement has not yet been concluded, but students have not shied away from earning the French degree alone. During its three-year existence, the number of students in the programme has doubled — the major draw being, it seems, that this way an Egyptian student can earn a foreign degree without leaving home. Rihana Abu-Ezz, a second-year student in the programme, adds that for her one of the advantages of this arrangement is that she receives more personal attention from the professors in Cairo than she would have had she enrolled at the Sorbonne itself.

Lamia Helmy, another second-year student, said that the main drawback of the current arrangement was not an issue for her. "I'd like to work in law or politics, but I don't want to practice law before courts in Egypt. It doesn't really matter to me if my certificate is not accepted by the Egyptian courts," she said.

Aside from offering students the chance to get a foreign degree, Cairo University's foreign language divisions also afford students a less expensive alternative to studying at the American University in Cairo (AUC) or at universities overseas. "I took the necessary test to enter AUC," said Wael Ghannam, a student in the Faculty of Commerce's English language programme. "But in the year I applied, AUC's tuition increased by 120 per cent, making it inaccessible for new students like myself."

"When I enrolled in this programme, however, I realised that our courses and texts are very similar to those used at the AUC," he said. "We also received a lot of one-on-one attention, and for me, this was one of the main reasons for wanting to attend AUC."

The programmes set out to be cost-efficient alternatives to the AUC, with no sacrifice in terms of quality of education. The enrolment fee for the English programme in the Faculty of Commerce is LE1,000; students are also required to pay an annual tuition fee of LE1,000 and to hand over another LE750 per year for books. These costs exceed those stipulated by a decree issued by the Higher Council for Universities, which limited costs to LE700 per year. However, both Dr Mahmoud Bazzaz, dean of the Faculty of Commerce, and Mahmoud El-Sharqawi, the Law Faculty's dean, said that the programmes would not be able to operate on such low fees. "This is less than what is charged by some private colleges, schools and state-owned institutions like the Suez Canal Authority," stated Bazzaz. "Were fees to be reduced, the student could not operate, he said.

For experts on higher education, this is a familiar story: education costs money, and budget crunches, tenure and departmental rankings are always sources of dispute between professors, administrators and students. The success of these programmes, however, seems to hinge not only on overcoming these financial factors, but in turning out students who have the skills necessary to compete successfully in the international market.



## Equipped for success

Ghada Kandil, a recent university graduate, initially intended to enrol at the American University in Cairo. However, she decided the English section at Alexandria University's Faculty of Commerce would help her "get a decent up-to-date education that would enhance my chances of getting a good job upon completion of my graduate studies."

Seeking the chance for a better future seems to be the main reason why students decide to join this department. Others are attracted by the small numbers of students in the English section compared to the thousands crammed together in huge halls in the Arabic section of the college.

The class of 1995 was the first to graduate from the English language department at the Faculty of Commerce. Established in 1990, the concept behind the department emerged while plans for the improvement of graduate education in general were being discussed. At present, the English language department offers specialisation in accounting, business administration and economics.

"When we started applying new educational systems in the Arabic department, we thought of having a special section which would grant

certificates equal to those granted by renowned foreign universities," explained Dr Ahmed Nour, dean of the Faculty of Commerce.

Dr Essam Salem, president of Alexandria University, noted that the English language department at the Faculty of Commerce was the only one of its kind in the university. In the near future, he added, a French language department will be established at the Faculty of Law in cooperation with the French Cultural Centre and French universities.

"We are very much aware of the need for foreign language graduates in the employment market. I strongly advise students to improve their language skills — a weapon for a successful career," said Salem.

Dr Abdel-Aziz Agameya, professor of economics at the Faculty of Commerce, said: "We focus on accepting a very small number every year to provide them with the best possible service." For the past four years, only 160 students were enrolled for each section. This year, however, the number has increased to 300. But the faculty board warns that too many students in the section would seriously affect the section's standards.

He added that because of the small number

of students in the English section last year, the faculty was able to offer summer training opportunities at banks and brokerage companies to more students.

According to Dean Nour, academic books are selected according to the best international standards. "Each professor is free to order the best references in his field," he said, adding that this raises the standard of education in the department.

On the whole, the project seems to be successful and prosperous. With the exception of a few drawbacks, the English language department of the Faculty of Commerce offers high quality education. After spending 4 years at the department, Kandil describes her experience there as "good" and "improving". In her opinion, professors are growing more accustomed to the system, a fact reflected in the thoroughness of their work.

"I feel sure of myself when I am being interviewed for jobs. I have no problems expressing myself in English using specialised terms. Interviewers are impressed," says Kandil.

However, some negative aspects remain. Heba, a second-year student, would like to see

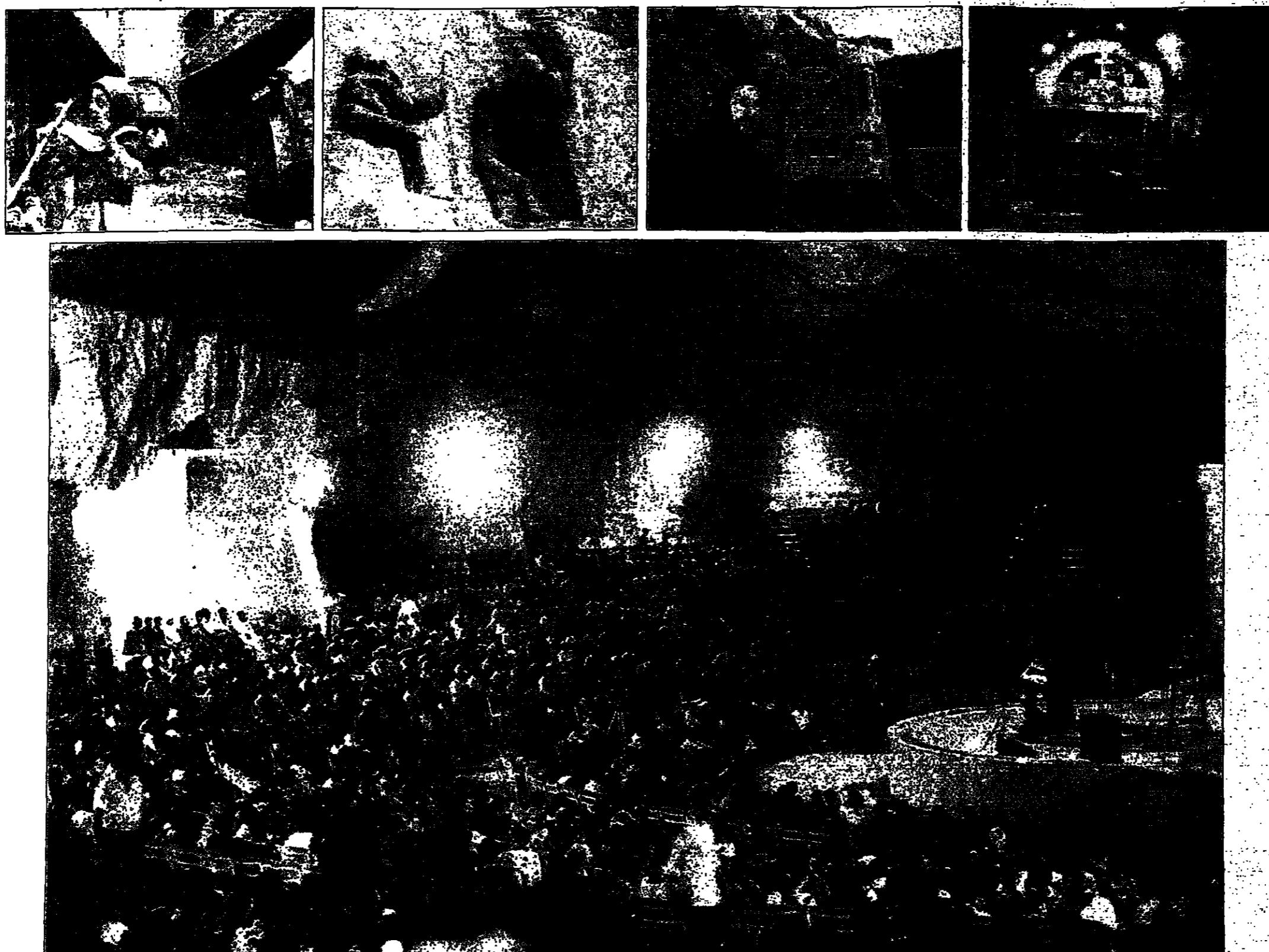
**Shahira Samy** visits the English language department at Alexandria University's Faculty of Commerce

extra time allocated for additional consultation with professors. "Not all professors are willing or have the time to give extra attention to students," says Heba, which means many would resort to private lessons, an eternal nightmare at the faculty. Kandil suggests more emphasis on computer skills, mentioning that the current course is insufficient.

Nour cited a lack of funds as an obstacle to funding members of the staff to train abroad or inviting foreign professors to lecture in Egypt. Both Nour and Agameya agree upon the necessity of proceeding cautiously with the expansion of foreign language departments in the country's universities. "Otherwise, these mushrooming departments will give a bad reputation to English language education in Egypt in general," warned Agameya.

Finally, although they are in far better condition than their fellow colleagues at the Arabic department, all English language students interviewed by the *Weekly* looked forward to being accommodated in "air-conditioned, nicely furnished lecture halls".

Edited by Fouad El-Gawhary



The meeting hall (above), a girl from the Zaballia community, a sculptor at work on a relief, the entrance to the cathedral, and the altar of St Paul's subterranean church. Photos: Sherif Sonbol

## A monastery and a miracle

A cavern cathedral forms the centrepiece of a magnificent monastery in a series of caves in the Moqattam Hills. Sherine Nasr describes the unusual site and the history and legends surrounding it

In the *Zaballia* area of the Moqattam Hills, one of Cairo's poorest areas, lies the magnificent monastery of St Saman. This monastery is no ancient monument — in fact it is a unique combination of the natural and the architectural. The area of the monastery embraces several natural caves, four of which have been converted into churches.

The main structure, the cathedral, is on a scale so huge as to be able to accommodate around 20,000 people. At the far end, on the ceiling before the large altar, is a huge, high-set relief of the Virgin Mary carrying the holy child. It is said to have been found, already carved, before the cathedral was excavated. "Almost a million tons of limestone were removed from inside the cave before the cathedral took its present form," said the aptly-named Father Saman, senior priest at the monastery. "Before the rubble was removed, we had to creep inside the cave on our knees to see the

statue." The carving was originally rough, he said, but after the cathedral was excavated, the carving was polished.

The massive cathedral comes to life every Thursday evening as congregations of thousands fill the massive auditorium, dominated by a relief carving on a huge rock, towering high above the people and depicting a scene from the Sermon on the Mount.

Also inside the monastic area is another rock-hewn church, St Mark's, a subterranean structure whose ground-level dome is decorated with colourful frescos of the crucifixion and resurrection. Above St Mark's, approached by a stairway, is another part of this cave, now transformed into a giant meeting hall, adorned with life-size reliefs depicting the local miracle. St Paul's church is another underground cave, discovered by chance in 1986. While work was in progress on other areas of the site, a giant block accidentally fell from a bulldozer. It plunged through a hole into a deep cave, supported by two columns. Father Saman said that the church was dedicated to St Paul because its inner features resemble those of St Paul's Monastery on the Red Sea coast.

St Saman is dedicated to a local saint,

who, by tradition, moved the Moqattam Hills. The moving of the hills of the Moqattam have remained such a strong image in people's minds that even a thousand years after the miracle, a monastery on the site is named after the miracle worker.

Saman's biography, as recorded in an ancient manuscript in St Anthony's Monastery in the Red Sea area, relates how, in 979AD, the Fatimid Caliph Al-Muezz Liddin Allah, a great enthusiast of religious debates, frequently gathered Christian and Jewish religious leaders together in open discussion. The Jewish government minister, Jacob Ibn Kahl, in an effort to cast doubt on the Christian religion, quoted from the Bible, St Matthew's gospel: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

The caliph was naturally sceptical and was about to declare the Christian faith a fallacy when, the story goes, providence stepped in and produced Saman. The humble shoemaker moved a hill from its previous location at the then Birket Al-Fil (now Al-Helmiya Al-Gedida) to Moqattam, and the Christians were spared.

Until the early 1970s, there was no proper church in

the area, although 95 per cent of the local community are Christians; then some 17,000 thousand people, now around 25,000. Back then, their homes were improvised hovels. Later some proper housing was provided and

a church built on a 1000 square metre area.

Two of the church's icons depict the miracle of Moqattam. One shows how the rays of the sun filled the space beneath the hills as they moved; the other depicts Saman as a middle-aged, bald, one-eyed man carrying a large jar on his back.

"St Saman is always portrayed this way, because he used to distribute water to the old and disabled even before his fame as a miracle worker spread," explained Father Saman. Some relics of St Saman, and a broken jar, said to be one he carried, are now in pride of place in his cathedral, some 200 metres from the church, placed there in 1991 after their discovery in St Mary's Church in Babylon Al-Darg in Old Cairo.

## Egypt before Crimea

Egypt was never part of Florence Nightingale's plan, but it marked a turning point in her life, as Elizabeth Rodenbeck reveals

Egypt was never seriously considered by Florence Nightingale. Nor was marriage. She saw too many of her early Victorian contemporaries being led like lambs to the slaughter and turned into docile baby machines. She wanted to be a nurse, an idea which gave her mother the vapours and elicited stony opposition from her entire well-to-do family. Why, a nurse was nothing but a coarse, drunken trollop. But she had made up her mind. All through her twenties Florence stifled her feelings and tried to behave like a dutiful daughter. She was bored to stupor by the domestic busyness of home, but never gave up on her secret agenda or gave in to the idea of marriage, though she had several proposals.

"Send her on the grand tour of Europe," suggested her father. She went, and spent most of the time looking at workhouses and slums. "Have her presented at court!" suggested her mother. She was presented to the young Queen Victoria, just a year older than herself. But she wasn't interested and withdrew into her private dreams at home and became more neurotic than ever.

"Send her to Egypt!" they said in desperation in 1849, and to Egypt she came for five months in the company of a sympathetic older couple. And though inwardly she was still pondering the call from God which she felt she must somehow answer, outwardly the very strangeness and beauty of Egypt as seen from the SS *Parthenope*, the party's *dahabeya*, the monuments, the sunsets, the peaceful river, the golden sands of Nubia were a potent tonic. She came laden with learned books on Egyptology which she studied conscientiously, but her keenest interest was reserved for the people, the state of their health and their living conditions. She described them in voluminous letters home which were collected by her sister and later published in 1854.

But she wasn't always serious. She had the usual fun, riding one of Cairo's 20,000 donkeys through streets "fragrant with oriental smells". "You address your ass in the tenderest terms, and in the purest Arabic; you adjure him by all the names of friendship to stop; but he understands no Arabic except his driver's and on he goes full trot, while you are making hairbreadth

scapes at every corner, yet receiving hardly a knock", Florence wrote cheerfully to her cousin.

"After threading these streets for miles, we came upon the square where stands the magnificent mosque of Sultan Hassan, and above it the Citadel, up which we wound... till we came to the mosque built by Muhammad Ali and not yet finished, though in it lie his bones. It is of splendid size, but tastefully ornamented, and looks better now with the scaffolding supporting those lofty domes, than ever it will do when decorated like Drury Lane. The obnoxious female [i.e. herself] is still admitted." She rode out to the pyramids and to the City of the Dead, inhabited by "houseless wanderers, ghouls and lepers".

The regime of the new Sultan Abbas, the grandson of the recently deceased Muhammad Ali, struck her as cruel. "Abbas Pasha is so furiously Mohammedan that he has just dismissed all Christians from his service, all that he could do without, besides 900 Coptic scribes who are fallen into the lowest poverty thereby." She was appalled by the wretchedness of the people: "Oh! if one could either forget, or believe, that the people here were one's fellow creatures, what a country this would be!"

The party hired a conventional *dahabeya* for 30 pounds a month, and Florence made a fine appliquéd flag. On their trip up the Nile she took the opportunity to explore the villages along the banks and see how the people lived.

"They call me 'the wild ass of the wilderness snuffing up the wind', she wrote. Egyptian impressions stayed long in her memory. Thirty years later, in 1879, she described "the glorious light of an Egyptian sunset, where all glows with colour, not like that of birds and flowers, but like transparent emeralds and sapphires and rubies and amethysts... the herds wandering their way home on the plain of Thebes by the colossal pair of sitting statues, followed by the stately woman in her one draped garment, plying her distaff, a naked,

degeneration of the monks "whose very religion has become an abomination." Christmas was spent at Luxor and Florence remarked that "the huts in the temple were each full of calves, turkeys, hens, goats, camels together with their men and women... one cannot conceive how even Moses could set about his work of regeneration here."

On 6 January 1850, the *Parthenope* reached Elephantine Island near Aswan: "a fumbled lair of a horde of savages". To Florence, Aswan was a godforsaken place, a "wilderness of mounds". She saw Egyptian slave girls sold by their parents for a handkerchief or a little box. On their return trip from Abu Simbel she noted that 200 workers at the sugar factory at Elw were paid the equivalent of a penny and three farthings a day. At Assut the party took needles and pins as a gift to Misrafa the cook's wife, but Florence was shocked again: "Polygamy strikes at the root of everything in women... she is not a wife, she is not a mother."

By mid-March they were back in Giza and soon took the steamer to Alexandria. Before sailing for Europe, Florence spent some days with the missionaries of St Vincent de Paul. Their humanitarian efforts on behalf of down-trodden people inspired her with admiration and affection. Here was a way of life that she could understand. Was this what God had been telling her to do?

Though Florence's trip to Egypt was conventional and relatively uneventful, it nevertheless marked a turning point in her life. On the way home she spent a few days in Germany at one of the only training schools for nurses then in existence. She had never been so happy. And when she got home, opposition evaporated and she was finally allowed to train as a nurse.

*Letter extracts from Florence Nightingale's Letters from Egypt: A Journey on the Nile 1849-1850, republished in 1987 by Weidenfeld & Nicolson*

## Treasures don't go to Florida

Efforts by an American exhibition broker to arrange an American tour has come to a halt. Omayma Abdellatif reports

The Ministry of Culture has decided to block a planned exhibition of Egyptian artifacts in the United States.

The 72-item exhibition, entitled "Splendors of Ancient Egypt", and including rare statues of Khafre, builder of the second Giza Pyramid, Queen Hatchepsut, a bust of Ramses II and an Akhenaten collection, was earmarked for a three-year tour of five American states, beginning with Florida, on 11 January.

The decision came only a few days after Dr Ne'man Ahmed Fouad, who opposes the policy of "sending Egypt's invaluable heritage" on foreign trips, began legal action against the Ministry of Culture and the Supreme Council of Antiquities SCA to ban the tour.

Like previous exhibitions organised in various parts of the world, this one came under fire from Fouad, as well as other critics, on the grounds that priceless artifacts might be damaged or replaced with fakes during the tour.

Fouad had the precedent of another legal victory against the Ministry of Culture on her side, and was confident that the court would take her side this time too.

"We managed to stop the Tokyo exhibition two years ago, also by court order," she said. "Although the artifacts had already been shipped abroad, we brought them back to where they belong."

News of the exhibition was leaked about two months ago, arousing fierce opposition not only because of the preciousness of the exhibits, but also because it was organised by an exhibition broker. A source at the SCA told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that there had been differences between the Ministry of Culture and the American broker on the issue of safety guarantees and the amount of insurance fees, which the ministry estimated at \$200 million, although revenue was not expected to exceed \$10 million.

The exhibition was the first to be planned since the court order blocking the Tokyo tour. Over the past two years, the Ministry of Culture has turned down several requests to hold exhibitions in a number of foreign cities. But last June, the ministry's exhibition committee approved five exhibitions, three in the United States, one in Britain and the fifth in Thailand.

Before the Ministry of Culture's decision was announced, SCA Secretary-General Dr Abdel-Halim Noureddin had said that the exhibition would provide much-needed revenue for the restoration of monuments and the excavation of new sites.

"As long as these exhibitions stick to the rules set by the exhibition committee regarding insurance policies and financial revenue, they remain good promotion for Egypt," he said.

However, the Ministry of Culture's decision that the treasures should remain in Egypt, much to the relief of Fouad and her supporters, was taken on the grounds of a "lack of safety guarantees with the American broker".

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Florence Nightingale



Dredging the dross: Ghana slipped past Egypt to secure a 2-1 victory. Will the ACN be any different?

photo: Hassan Diab

## Africa gears up for ACN cup

In what will prove to be the biggest continental sports tournament since the 1995 All Africa Games in Zimbabwe, soccer teams from 16 African countries will converge on South Africa on 13 January for the 20th African Cup of Nations (ACN). Almost one year ago, 43 teams entered the ACN's preliminaries, and out of the pack, 14 rose to the top to secure a place in the championship. The race to the top, however, is far from over. For three weeks these 14 teams, along with South Africa which was guaranteed a place since it is hosting the competition, will be divided into four groups and will battle it out in a series of matches to see who emerges as the cup holder for this year.

Along with traditional competitors and favourites such as Egypt, Ghana, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire, it will also include several newcomers like South Africa, Liberia and Angola. Nigeria, a long-time competitor will not be participating for political reasons, and, at time of press, it was not clear whether Guinea will take its place.

What will add to the pace and intensity of the matches is the participation of various key African soccer players who play on the professional circuit in South America and Europe, like George Weah of AC Milan, Anthony Yeboah of Leeds United and Oman Biyick of Mexico's Club America. Other young up-starts hope to use the tournament as a means of catching the eye of professional scouts itching to discover another Pele, who, incidentally, will be in attendance.

### The 16 finalists for South Africa '96

#### Group A

##### South Africa

As the host country, South Africa qualified automatically, no doubt a pleasing turn of events for the country which has never participated in this championship before. And, if national team coach Clive Barker has anything to do with it, South Africa could walk away with the cup and a big smile on the faces of the team members and President Nelson Mandela. This, however, may be little more than a pipe dream as the young team has the ability but may not have the experience to defeat the rest.

**Key players:** Doctor Khumalo, Phil Masinga, John Mosheu.

##### Egypt

Known as the Pharaohs, the Egyptian national team is the Group A favourite and champion in 1957, 1959 and 1986 ACN competitions. While many of the team's previous performances were less than promising, a strong finish in the All Africa Games, and a pep session with team coach Ruud Krol will help them begin the matches with a clean slate and a little pepper.

**Key players:** Ahmed Kass, Magdi Tolba, Hadi Kasha.

##### Cameroon

If internal squabbles over money are resolved amicably, the 1984 and 1988 champions will be able to

put up some strong competition, and at the least, make up for their poor performance in the 1994 World Cup. However, a great deal depends on their opening match with South Africa.

**Key players:** Oman Biyick, Alphonse Tchami.

##### Angola

Although new to the ACN, Angola should not be counted out until the fat lady has sung. As Group 6 winners in the qualifiers, Angola packs enough power to cause some upsets and squeeze past other teams while other Group A contenders kick the stuffing out of each other.

**Key players:** Fabrice Akwa, Paulo Alves.

#### Group B

##### Zambia

Following a plane crash which killed most of the Zambian team's players in 1994, they went on to become runners-up in the ACN. And, while recent performances may be unstable, Zambia could still make it into the final four.

**Key players:** Kalusha Bwalya, Kenneth Matloli.

##### Algeria

Along with Zambia, Algeria is a Group B favourite, a standing complemented by their 1990 ACN victory. For coach Ali Fergani and his team, it has been a tough year, spotted with terrorism, but they still made it through the Group 4 qualifiers behind Egypt.

**Key players:** Kaci Said, Abdel-Hafidh Tafsaout.

##### Burkina Faso

This is the team's second shot at the cup, and no doubt, they hope to fare better than they did in their 1978 debut where they were knocked out in the first round. They have, in their favour, the fact that they were the surprise winners in the Group 7 qualifiers, where they defeated Côte d'Ivoire and Morocco.

**Key players:** Abou Quarata, Ousmane Sanou.

##### Sierra Leone

The burden of proof lies heavily on the shoulders of coach Roger Palmgren as he leads his team into its second ACN competition. Short of last place, any finish this year will probably be better than last year where they were not placed in the rankings. But to save some face and a few goals, they will have to contend with Zambia and Algeria, two top contenders. The key to their pseudo success may be this year's team made up of a mix of professionals and local players. This mixed team may be shaken, but not stirred.

**Key players:** Mohamed Kallon, Ibrahim Koroma.

#### Group C

##### Nigeria

Tournament favourites and champions in 1980 and 1994, Nigeria's last minute decision to boycott the competition has elicited mixed reactions worldwide. Guinea may take its place.

##### Zaire

Champions in 1968 and 1974, and with Nigeria out of the way, Zaire's shot at winning the Group C

competition looks even better. As the winners of the Group 1 qualifiers, Zaire is aiming for nothing less than being in the top two. But, best intentions often fall short of reality, and Zaire's German-Turkish coach, Sygi Wunder and team captain Jean-Claude Kabeya will have to put their money where their mouths are to succeed. Otherwise, they may find that they are eating humble pie. A second round berth is assured.

**Key players:** Jean-Claude Kabeya, Bunene Ngaduane.

##### Gabon

Another second-timer which like Sierra Leone, did not place in the first appearance in the ACN, Gabon's coach, Alain de Costa Soares is counting on a strong defensive game to lead the team to victory. Second round berth is a difficult task. The team first participated in the competition in 1994.

**Key players:** Pierre Aubame, Guy Roger Nzambo.

##### Liberia

Newcomer Liberia finished second ahead of Senegal in Group 2 qualifications. Much attention is on George Weah, but coach Wilfred Landor has balanced the team with more than 13 professionals in Europe. Pigeon-holed with Zaire, Liberia's chance at making it into the second round is slim but not to be ruled out. **Key players:** George Weah, Christopher Wreh.

#### Group D

##### Ghana

Second tournament favourites and champions in 1963, 1965, 1978 and 1982, Ghana parades a mixture of die-hard old stars and youths from the reigning World Youth Cup champions.

**Key players:** Abedi Pele, Anthony Yeboah.

##### Côte d'Ivoire

The 1992 champions, the Elephants are Ghana's arch-rivals. Their clashes have never been easy, and a repeat of the scenario where they crushed Ghana in 1994 will be the Elephants' primary task (excuse the pun). Like Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire's success will depend much on its placing in Group D.

**Key players:** Abdoulaye Traore, Aka Kouame.

##### Tunisia

The enormous task of rebuilding Tunisia's soccer programme after the 1994 Cup disaster has been coach Henri Kazperjek's main objective. How successful his efforts have been will be determined during this competition. Tunisia topped the lists in the Group 2 qualifiers.

**Key players:** Shukri El-Ouaer, Mourad Chebbi.

##### Mozambique

Putting aside long years of civil war, Mozambique emerged as a surprise qualifier ahead of Guinea and Mali in the Group 6 qualifiers to win the chance of competing in the ACN for the second time. The team's first shot at the cup came in 1986. Despite its efforts, the prognosis is not good given the calibre of the other Group D teams.

**Key players:** Chiquinho Conde, George Fernandez.

Saleh be nimble, Saleh be quick, Saleh could not avoid fans hurling bricks. Amira Ibrahim offers some insights into the status of Egypt's national soccer team as it departs for South Africa

## Some succor for soccer

Although Egypt's national soccer team came at the top of its group in the African Cup of Nations (ACN) qualifiers, critics and fans remain sceptical about the team's expected performance in South Africa.

The reason behind this pessimism, critics maintain, is that the overall level of Egyptian soccer, as reflected by the top three teams, Ahli, Zamalek and Ismailia, is nothing to write home about. These three teams walked away from the last three Arab and African competitions with nothing to show for their efforts except a bruised ego.

But, the roots of the issue go back much further. Over the last two years, the Egyptian national team has fallen victim to a number of unsettling turns of events which included the replacement of five technical staff. During the qualifying rounds for the ACN, the coaching staff was replaced twice.

The first blow to the team came with the defection of its Dutch coach, Nol de Ruiter, who fled from Tunisia two days before Egypt played the Algerian national team. While Egypt lost the match 1-0, de Ruiter offered a hasty explanation that he was frightened off by the wave of terrorism in Algeria.

Later, upon his return to Holland, the fleeing Dutchman explained that the real reason behind his sudden departure was a belief that Egyptian soccer would not progress so long as soccer officials continue to intervene in every facet of the game. Describing Egyptian soccer officials as being "short-sighted". "They are more concerned about the goalkeeper, Shobeir, than they are about preparing the national team for the ACN," a Dutch newspaper quoted Ruiter as saying.

Ruiter went on to criticise the Egyptian press, claiming it had helped lead to public hostility against him whenever the team lost a game, including friendly matches. His has not been alone in voicing these complaints. Every coach who has worked with the team has made similar assertions.

In an attempt to smooth over rough waters, the Egyptian Football Federation (EFF), appointed Ruiter's assistant, Mohsen Saleh, as managing coach.

Saleh led the team to the ACN finals in Johannesburg, but at a price where he excluded and alienated many of the team's leading players.

Fans, however, wary of having an Egyptian head coach, were not satisfied. Disgruntled, a number of fans took it upon themselves to stone Saleh on the field, and a number of peeved players broke into his house and assaulted him. For better or for worse, the EFF remained steadfast in its decision to have Saleh coach the team — that is until the second string national team went off to Zimbabwe for the 1995 All Africa Games and brought home the gold.

At this point, Ruud Krol, another Dutchman who had been coaching the Olympic team, re-

placed Saleh. The Egyptian coach, battered and bruised, accepted his old position with a sigh of relief. This move came two months before the ACN was set to start, and critics, again, were critical. Many wondered if a change so late in the game was the most prudent move. Others were concerned about whether Krol and Saleh would be able to cooperate, or if professional rivalry would overshadow all other efforts.

These critics did not have to wonder for long. Ten days before the ACN was scheduled to kick off, Saleh resigned his post as assistant coach, accusing Krol of neglecting him and usurping too much power. He added that Krol was unfit as a coach and that his 4-4-2 game strategy was ineffective for the Egyptian team.

Saleh may indeed have been sincere in his criticism, or he may have been trying to save his skin in case Egypt lost badly in South Africa. In either case, it didn't make much difference. After the team was defeated 2-1 by Ghana in a friendly match about one week ago, he was again stoned. Lightning may not strike twice in the same spot, but stones seem to have a way of finding their mark.

Harassing and assaulting! Saleh, aside, the team, prior to its departure, faced other challenges. To the amazement of all who cared, it was revealed that there would be no professionals playing for the team in the ACN. In fact, with the exception of Hami Ramzi, a free agent who plays for Switzerland's New Shuttle Club, the national team does not have any professional players on its rosters, at all.

While in the past, the national team had been comprised of Ahli and Zamalek players, the new team includes only nine players from these two clubs. Most of the rest are young up-and-comers drawn from the ranks of Krol's Olympic team. This amounts to a classic case of sibling rivalry where the older players feel neglected in favour of the new players.

In addition, over the last few days, Krol has replaced six players for reasons of physical fitness, or lack thereof. "This could be a major stumbling block that can ruin our chances in South Africa," said Krol, explaining his move. For the last three weeks, he has introduced a three-times-a-day training regimen which has the older players grumbling and bumbling.

This, however, may all be in vain given that the team, with the exception of three friendly matches played at home against Tunisia, Ghana and AC Roma, has had no international exposure.

"No national team in the world," complained Krol, "can participate successfully in such a big competition (ACN) with only local preparation."

Maybe not, but the difference between a winning team and a losing team is the ability to do the best with what is available. Krol is embroiled in a contract dispute with the EFF as a result of the loss to Ghana. He has signed, but the EFF is still delaying.

Krol has yet to offer guarantees on the outcome of the ACN — perhaps a wise choice given the accuracy of stone-hurling fans.

## Hand to handball combat

Fate and a couple of bad plays forced the Egyptian handball team to accept second place in the International Handball Tournament. Inas Mazhar reports from Spain's Ciudad Real

Two hundred miles south of the Spanish capital, Madrid, lies Ciudad Real, a small city in the heart of bullfighting country. But, from 5-7 January, the only red to be seen was not the capes of the matadors, but in the eyes of the handball players from four different countries, all of whom were vying for first place in Spain's International Handball Tournament.

Egypt's world-ranked number six team arrived in the stadium full of confidence, which quickly turned to dismay following a loss to the Norwegian team in the first match. Playing the worst game they had played in quite a while, the Egyptians handed a 26-22 victory to Nor-

way on a silver platter.

"It would have been difficult to win any match playing the way we were," said Assem El-Saadany, Egypt's coach. "The Norwegians were not better than us, it is just that we played poorly. They benefited from our errors."

After a little R&R, the Egyptians came back the second day, recharged, full of confidence and swearing bloody vengeance. Taking on another Scandinavian team, Denmark, Egypt made up for the previous day's defeat by pulling ahead of the Danes, 31-29.

"We played a lot better in this match and deserved to win," explained El-Saadany.

With a record of 1-1, the final day of competition would determine just where Egypt stood. And, after a hard-fought match, Egypt stood right behind Spain in second place.

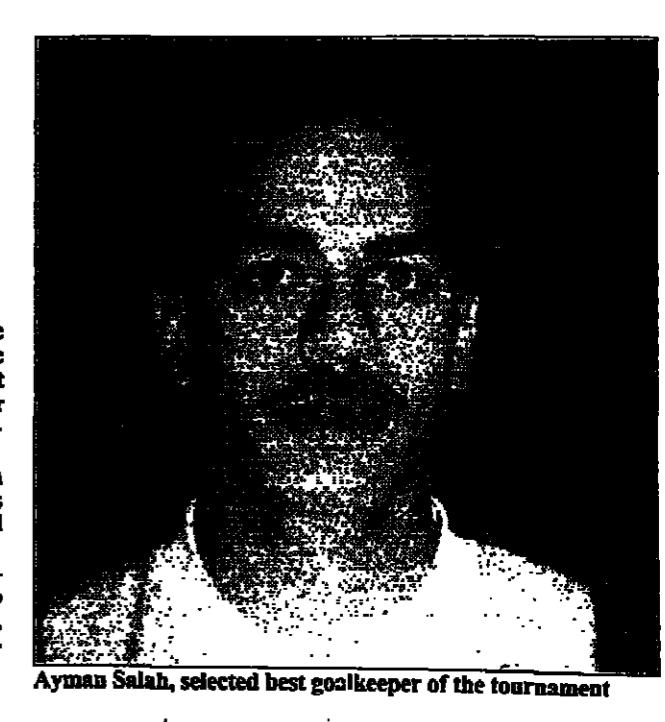
Although the Egyptian team took the lead in the first half, the Spanish team, perhaps recalling the old conquistador days, came back to even the score 13-13. Then, recalling that 13 is an unlucky number, they pulled ahead to lead 22-15 by the 20th minute of the second half. By this time, Egypt realised that it was behind and drove hard to score two additional goals.

But with 10 minutes to go until the end of the game, El-Saadany changed the strategy by press-

ing on the counter-attacks and defence. The gamble worked, and allowed the team to score 10 goals in eight minutes. It was, however, not enough to close the gap. With four goals of their own, the Spanish team took the gold with a 26-25 victory.

Trailing behind Egypt was Norway which came in third and Denmark in fourth. Spain's Raul Gonzales was named best player and Egypt's Ayman Salah, best goalie.

Following the tournament in Spain, the Egyptian team traveled to Sweden on Monday to compete in the 1996 World Cup. For five days, the world's eight best teams will go head-to-head for the gold.



# Mohamed Khan: Human elements

His camera stands there, in the middle of the street, in the middle of the day, as the crowd ebbs and swirls. He watches people, and people watch right back

By the late 1970s and early '80s, the Egyptian film industry was undergoing a sharp turn which was to result, by the mid-'80s, in the emergence of a totally new genre, obscure to Egyptian audiences and critics alike: the misleadingly named *waq'ya gadida* (neo-realism).

Characteristic of the genre was the choice of characters, events, settings, and even actors unfamiliar to the heavily star-oriented industry. The tone was melancholy, the rhythm deceptively monotonous: protagonists were depicted in real life situations, and audiences watched, bewildered, as they struggled through. Whatever the order of ranking, Mohamed Khan was undoubtedly instrumental in the birth and continuity of the genre.

Brought up in Egypt, Khan has been an earnest film viewer since his early teens. At the age of 18, he went to England, purportedly to fulfil his family's expectations, set on his engineering studies. His fascination with film was only to deepen, however; for a film buff, he had the best seats in the house.

During the early '60s, says Khan, "London was like a European cultural centre: fashion, music — the Beatles — art and film. There were films from all over the world; more than any other city in Europe."

During his A-level courses, Khan found out about the British Film School, where he soon began to attend an evening course in film technique. Mornings, he worked as a clerk in a trade indemnity company. Then cinematographer Said Shimi, Khan's childhood friend, wrote to him that the General Egyptian Company for Cinema, headed by prominent director Salah Abu Seif, was scouting out new talent. Hopeful, Khan came to Egypt and met Abu Seif, who asked him what he would like to do. Khan, embarrassed to tell the great Abu Seif that he also wanted to direct, answered: "Script writing". Asked to submit a sample of his writing, Khan had a script ready in three months. Called *Faraag* ("Emptiness"), it was submitted to the Reading and Script Department. "The members of the committee evaluated my script, approved it and the company bought it. I was also asked to join the department," says Khan. But a year later he discovered he was "not really doing anything except reading some scripts from time to time. I reached a dead end, so I took the risk of resigning and went to Lebanon."

Again, Khan found himself in the front row: Lebanon was spearheading the Arab film industry during the mid-'60s, and Khan spent two years living what he remembers as "a young man's adventure". He looked for any job in film. He was second assistant director in three films and first assistant in another but "all four were mediocre." So it was back to England in 1966 for another six years, a journey which he describes as "the dark period". Khan ended up in a biscuit factory, in a laundry, mini-cabbing: "I would take any job, even a manual one in the evening, as long as I could attend the press film screenings during the day," he says. He began to doubt whether he would ever be able to return to film-making. After all, his only films so far were short projects, on 8mm and 16mm.

Three years later he started a publishing company. He wrote and published *An Introduction To Egyptian Cinema* in 1969 — the only book on the subject in English to date — and edited *An Outline of Czechoslovak Cinema*.

The end of the dark period saw the birth of his first 35mm short film, *Watermelon*: nine-minutes in black-and-white shot during a holiday in Egypt. Back in England, he opened a jeans store, got married and had his first son. His encounter in 1977 with prominent editor Nadia Choukry, who eventually edited all his films, was to have a major impact. "She wondered what I was doing with all my interest in film

and encouraged me to return to Egypt and produce a movie," Khan says. And so he did. Fayed Ghali scripted *Darbet Shams* ("Shams's Blow"), and superstar Nour El-Sherif was approached to play the leading role. "He liked the script and offered to produce it, so I jumped at the idea because I lacked production experience," says Khan.

The film was a success at the box office. Because it was an action film, "I could easily have been pigeonholed. The entire industry thought of me as an action director, became the black sheep of the industry because I kept refusing scripts. I still didn't know what type of film I preferred making, and it took me three films to discover that," he says. Misunderstood, he was accused of vanity — an accusation flung at him until today. "Any kind of independence generates this kind of accusation; but eventually they realised that I'd be bringing my own topics." Khan brought "package deals": he would choose the scriptwriter, actors, then look for a producer. "I was the one to decide," he states.

Khan has very rigid opinions of those involved in the film industry. "Real producers, if there are any, are very rare. Instead, we have financiers who only care about profit; the producer-director relationship in the artistic sense does not exist. We lack producers who think of the subject, visualise locations and suitable actors. Although money-based conflicts did occur, they couldn't boycott me since all my films were profitable," says Khan. Four of his feature films were produced by major actors; he produced or co-produced another four himself.

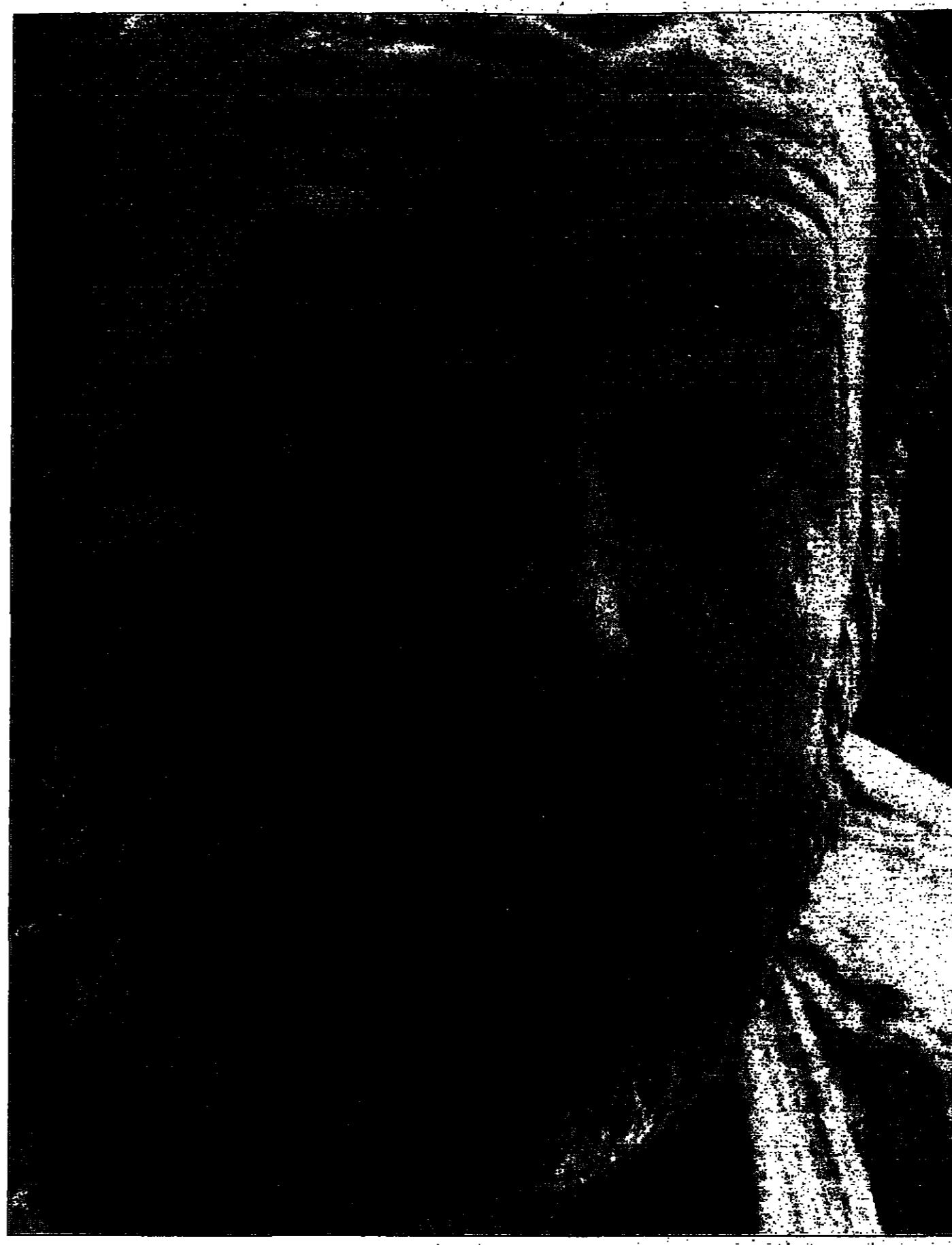
In the beginning Khan collaborated with Said Shimi, who had a similar background and similar dreams. Khan is master-of-fact about the way the relationship evolved. "As we grew up we went our separate ways. I think of a photography director the same way I think of an actor. Although every photography director feels (and it is his right) that he can shoot any type of film, I don't feel the same. Team work in film is not necessarily a marriage; it's exactly like casting to me. The same applies to writers: one writer can script a particular film better than another writer. But the most mature writer I know is Assem Tawfiq. I love his writing. It's like a wise man writing." Khan says.

Khan's collaboration with Beshir El-Dik "opened a lot of doors, made us discover the possibility of a different kind of cinema," he says. Most of the ideas were Khan's, but what particularly interested him was El-Dik's descriptive style. "His works seemed more like novels than scripts," he says.

Khan has managed to preserve his genre and refuse typically commercial films. To him it is a simple equation: "Suppose my audience is around five million and the total Arab film audience is 90 million. I'm satisfied. Otherwise I would have to make different movies altogether... I wouldn't like that."

It is his human approach towards people and situations, devoid of excessive melodrama or farce, and the subtly melancholic or humourous touches in the portrayal of his characters, that account for his films' outstanding quality. "I wish I could make a 'human' film, where the characters are see-through, understood, within their cultural and human dilemmas. Bringing such characters on screen with my own film language is a dream I hope will come true. This is the exciting thing about film. I think all the gimmicks of technology and special effects are going bankrupt. In the end people will return to the simple form, the human element..." he says.

"My emphasis is never on the structure or development of the plot; it is always on the characters — an emphasis which is not very common here," he explains. This is why critics and audiences alike consistently wonder where the storyline is. Khan's



answer: "I'm more interested in the character of the human being. I talk about people."

And indeed he does. The screen pulsates with life: people appear to be going about their daily routines — eating and drinking, using public transportation; dealing money, lending, borrowing, depositing, cashing, buying, selling, bribing. A familiarity builds up between people, between those watching and those on the screen. Their expressions and gestures allow the viewer to empathise with their hidden fears, anxieties, worries, deprivations and inner conflicts. The glamour that costumes and make-up give to stars in most films is replaced by emotions, attitudes, expressions and actions. Charismatic presence on screen is not the name of the game here. As a matter of fact, most climactic and conclusive scenes have relied on silent, composed, but highly expressive faces.

After working with Khan, most actors

claim to have discovered radically new approaches and dimensions to the characters they play. Superstar Adel Imam worked in a shoe factory in *Al-Harrif* (Street Player); Ahmed Zaki was a homeless car attendant in *Mister Karate*.

Which brings us to another gripe against Khan's films: they expose life in the gritty, real parts of Egypt. Well, sorry, Khan never shoots in built sets. His locations are streets, alleyways, squares, five-star hotels. "The location has to go with the characters. By shooting *Dreams of Hind And Camellia* in Helipolis, which is not as poor as the characters [two maids] would have called for, I didn't go to the extreme at all. But I still received criticism. It's just oversensitivity from their side," explains Khan. Veteran assistant cameraman Ismail El-Sos explains that Khan's camera stands smack in the centre of crowded streets — no apologies, no attempt at discreet dissimulation — unlike other di-

rectors of his genre who prefer to conceal it. "He is one director not afraid of exposing his camera in midday, in spite of that, hardly any of his shots are disturbed by the crowds," says El-Sos.

Khan's films often tackle women's position in society, their ambitions for improvement and the brick wall of reality they always come up against. His women are often romantic, sentimental and delicate, coupled with cruel, possessive and aggressive spouses who treat them as inferior physical possessions. The conflict erupts when the dream knight appears, seeking a union with the often married woman, a victim of tradition and prisoner of society (*Desire, Bird on the Road, Dinner Date, Wife of an Important Man, Dreams of Hind and Camellia, The Drowned Woman*).

Economic conditions also play a central role; money, in Khan's films, translates into pleasure and assistance to the needy,

but it is also a basic prerequisite for the stability of emotions. So the poor have petty jobs, or steal, the rich are burdened by debts in their twisted businesses, while the middle class is exploited by both rich and poor (*Return of a Citizen, Youssef and Zeinab, Dreams of Hind and Camellia, Supermarket, City Knight, A Very Hot Day*).

Khan is reticent on this point. "I don't like to read into my films. I just like to make them and give them a life of their own. I'm a completely non-political person. If I have any political elements they come from the surroundings of my characters."

Film makers of the younger generation think that watching a Khan picture is like reading poetry, while viewers say it is more like a window to real life. For Khan, he "would be satisfied just to be considered an interesting director."

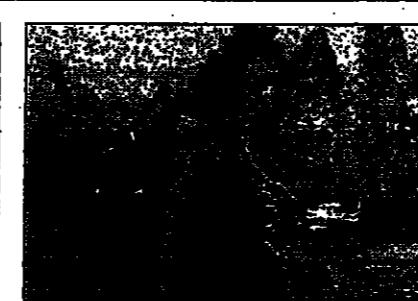
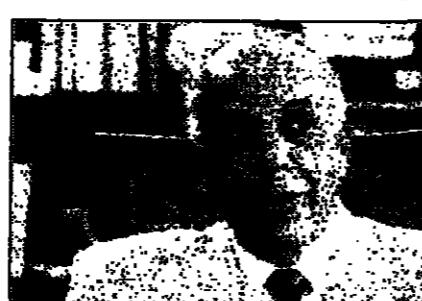
*Profile by Mohamed El-Assouly*

## Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris

Just as I was beginning to get the feeling that the party season had come to a temporary end, lo and behold an invitation to what's bound to be the best party of them all landed on my doorstep and sent my sinking heart soaring once more. Today, the whole Al-Ahram family is celebrating the birthday of chairman of the board, head of the press syndicate, Al-Ahram's editor-in-chief and father figure to us all Ibrahim Nafie. I always look forward to this day, dear, especially because Nafie always expresses his gratitude and love for us on this special occasion in his own way by turning the tables and giving out gifts to his loyal and loving friends.

So far this month, the music has been my life-force. Never, for all the world, dears, would I have missed a great jazz performance by Yehya Khalil and a brilliant piano recital by Mansura El-Saless at the Opera House, and Ahmed Sidki's marvellous operetta, *A Night From One Thousand And One Nights* at Al-Gomhouria theatre. Starting the year on a serene and harmonious note, on the fifth Moushira treated us to the works of Gamal Abdel-Rahim, Tchaikovsky and Sibelius. A couple of days later, Yehya did his groovy stuff in an extra special concert of the great works of the legendary Duke Ellington and John Coltrane, with American saxophonist Chet Passarella, Irish



Clockwise  
from top left:  
Ibrahim Nafie;  
Breytenbach, De Goede and Neubauer;  
flirtatious fashion by Attar;  
transport Rizqallah style

bass player John McCullough, Ilhab Radwan on guitar, Amr El-Bahrani on piano and Akram El-Sharkawi skillfully mastering the keyboard. So, with all that out of the way, I now have until the end of the month to attend Ahmed's operetta, starring actor Yehya El-Fakharani, singers Angham and Ali El-Haggag, and directed by Selim Sehlab.

as many more times as I want.

I always look for every opportunity to bring me closer to the region where I spent so many years, and which will always stay close to my heart. I may never have had a farm in Africa, dears, but I did have the pleasure of meeting two distinguished

nights, however, are a different matter altogether: when I spoke to her a few days ago, she told me that if she heard one more cowbell she was liable to commit a crime. But thankfully, there are a number of more exciting matters that are keeping her occupied. Most of you probably recognise her name because it appeared alongside some of the most

spectacular photographs published in the *Weekly* over the past few years. Some of her best work, I believe, included the photographs published on this very page, in the Profile section. When Randa was awarded the six-month scholarship to Switzerland by Pro Helvita, she decided to continue taking portraits of prominent Egyptian personalities, and, as you read this, an exhibition entitled "Profiles: Portraits from Egypt" opens today in Boswil, to be later followed by a slide-show of her work in one of the country's largest daily newspapers in Zurich, the *Neue Zürich Zeitung*. Have no fears, for you too will be able to see a selection of her portraits when they are exhibited in the Sony Gallery of the American University in Cairo in March.

If you find yourself in Alexandria this month and feel like exposing yourself to a little more culture than usual, then go to the Spanish Cultural Centre and enjoy the sculptures of one of my favourite artists, Abdess Ramzi Rizqallah. Toddle along now dears, because until the twenty-third, this exhibition is guaranteed to take you places you've never been.

Call me a fashion victim, a dedicated follower of fashion, dears, call me what you will, but there was absolutely no way I would have missed fashion show at the Cairo Sheraton last week featuring the designs of the young and ambitious fashion designer Dalia Attar. The hotel's Tea Garden provided a pleasure backdrop to the stunning evening gowns, cocktail dresses and exquisitely designed *gallabiyas*. All of which, I have to tell you, were just so me that I had to hold myself back from crying out with glee.

دعا عاصي